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THE  
MEANING OF HISTORY

*AND OTHER HISTORICAL PIECES*

BY  
FREDERIC HARRISON

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## NOTE

THIS volume contains a collection of essays designed to stimulate the systematic study of general history. They are (with two exceptions) the permanent and condensed form of historical lectures given in a series of courses at various places of education. The writer has been constantly occupied with the teaching of history since 1862; and the first two chapters of this book were the introduction to a course of lectures given in that year to a London audience. They were printed at the time, but the issue has been long exhausted. The third chapter (which is in effect a Choice of Books of History) and also the fifth chapter (a synthetic survey of the Thirteenth Century) were inaugural lectures given in the New Schools at Oxford to the summer vacation students. The other chapters are based on lectures given by the writer at various times at Newton Hall, Toynbee Hall, the London Institution, and other literary and scientific institutions. Several of these chapters (about half the present volume in bulk) have already appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* and in one or two other periodicals. They have in all cases been carefully revised and partly rewritten; and the author has to express to the Editors and Proprietors of these organs his grateful thanks for the courtesy with which he has been enabled to use them.



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# THE MEANING OF HISTORY

## CHAPTER I

### THE USE OF HISTORY

WHAT is the use of historical knowledge? Is an acquaintance with the events, the men, the ideas of the past, of any real use to us in these days—has it any practical bearing upon happiness and conduct in life?

Two very different answers may be given to this question. The Gradgrind and the Jack Cades assure us that there is no use at all. We are, they would say with Bacon, the mature age of the world, with us lies the gathered wisdom of ages. To waste our time in studying exploded fallacies, in reproducing worn-out forms of society, or in recalling men who were only conspicuous because they lived amidst a crowd of ignorant or benighted barbarians, is to wander from the path of progress, and to injure and not to improve our understandings.

On the other hand, the commonplace of literary gossip declares that history has fifty different uses. It is amusing to hear what curious things they did in bygone times. Then, again, it is very instructive as a study of character; we see in history the working of the human mind and will. Besides, it is necessary to

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written by a Greek two thousand years ago. If he takes up a grammar, he will be only repeating rules taught by Roman schoolmasters and professors. Or is he interested in art? He will find the same thing in a far greater degree. He goes to the British Museum, and he walks into a building which is a good imitation of a Greek temple. He goes to the Houses of Parliament to hear a debate, and he enters a building which is a bad imitation of a mediæval town-hall. Or, again, we know that he reads his Shakespeare and Milton; feels respect for the opinions of Bacon or of Hume, or Adam Smith. Such a man, the moment he takes a warm interest in anything—in politics, in education, in science, in art, or in social improvement—the moment that his intelligence is kindled, and his mind begins to work—that moment he is striving to throw himself into the stream of some previous human efforts, to identify himself with others, and to try to understand and to follow the path of future progress which has been traced out for him by the leaders of his own party or school. Therefore, such a man is not consistent when he says that history is of no use to him. He does direct his action by what he believes to be the course laid out before him; he does follow the guidance of certain teachers whom he respects.

We have then only to ask him on what grounds he rests his selection; why he chooses some and rejects all others; how he knows for certain that no other corner of the great field of history will reward the care of the ploughman, or bring forth good seed. In spite of himself, he will find himself surrounded in every act and thought of life by a power which is too strong for him. If he chooses simply to stagnate, he may, perhaps, dispense with any actual reference to the past; but the

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moment he begins to act, to live, or to think, he must use the materials presented to him, and, so far as he is a member of a civilised community, so far as he is an Englishman, so far as he is a rational man, he can as little free himself from the influence of former generations as he can free himself from his personal identity; unlearn all that he has learnt; cease to be what his previous life has made him, and blot out of his memory all recollection whatever.

Let us suppose for a moment that any set of men could succeed in sweeping away from them all the influences of past ages, and everything that they had not themselves discovered or produced. Suppose that all knowledge of the gradual steps of civilisation, of the slow process of perfecting the arts of life and the natural sciences, were blotted out; suppose all memory of the efforts and struggles of earlier generations, and of the deeds of great men, were gone; all the landmarks of history; all that has distinguished each country, race, or city in past times from others; all notion of what man had done, or could do; of his many failures, of his successes, of his hopes; suppose for a moment all the books, all the traditions, all the buildings of past ages to vanish off the face of the earth, and with them the institutions of society, all political forms, all principles of politics, all systems of thought, all daily customs, all familiar arts; suppose the most deep-rooted and most sacred of all our institutions gone; suppose that the family and home, property, and justice were strange ideas without meaning; that all the customs which surround us each from birth to death were blotted out; suppose a race of men whose minds, by a paralytic stroke of fate, had suddenly been deadened to every recollection, to whom the whole world was new,—can



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we imagine a condition of such utter helplessness, confusion, and misery?

Such a race might retain their old powers of mind and of activity, nay, both might be increased tenfold, and yet it would not profit them. Can we conceive such a race acting together, living together, for one hour? They would have everything to create. Would any two agree to adopt the same custom, and could they live without any? They would have all the arts, all the sciences to reconstruct anew; and even their tenfold intellect would not help them there. With minds of the highest order it would be impossible to think, for the world would present one vast chaos; even with the most amazing powers of activity, they would fall back exhausted from the task of reconstructing, reproducing everything around them. Had they the wisest teachers or the highest social or moral purposes, they would all be lost and wasted in an interminable strife, and continual difference; for family, town, property, society, country, nay, language itself, would be things which each would be left to create for himself, and each would create in a different manner. It would realise, indeed, the old fable of the tower of Babel; and the pride of self would culminate in confusion and dispersion. A race with ten times the intellect, twenty times the powers, and fifty times the virtues of any race that ever lived on earth would end, within a generation, in a state of hopeless barbarism; the earth would return to the days of primeval forests and swamps, and man descend almost to the level of the monkey and the beaver.

Now, if this be true, if we are so deeply indebted and so indissolubly bound to preceding ages, if all our hopes of the future depend on a sound understanding of the past, we cannot fancy any knowledge more important

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than the knowledge of the way in which this civilisation has been built up. If the destiny of our race, and the daily action of each of us, are so completely directed by it, the useful existence of each depends much upon a right estimate of that which has so constant an influence over him ; will be advanced as he works with the working of that civilisation, above him, and around him ; will be checked as he opposes it ; it depends upon this, that he mistakes none of the elements that go to make up that civilisation as a whole, and sees them in their due relation and harmony.

This brings us to that second class of objectors ; those who, far from denying the interest of the events of the past, far from seeing no use at all in their study, are only too ready in discovering a multitude of reasons for it, and at seeing in it a variety of incongruous purposes. If they suppose that it furnishes us with parallels when similar events occur, the answer is, that similar events never do and never can occur in history. The history of man offers one unbroken chain of constant change, in which no single situation is ever reproduced. The story of the world is played out like a drama in many acts and scenes, not like successive games of chess, in which the pieces meet, combat, and manœuvre for a time, and then the board is cleared for another trial, and they are replaced in their original positions. Political maxims drawn crudely from history may do more harm than good. You may justify anything by a pointed example in history. It will show you instances of triumphant tyranny and triumphant tyrannicide. You may find in it excuses for any act or any system. What is true of one country is wholly untrue of another. What led to a certain result in one age, leads to a wholly opposite result in another.

Then as to character, if the sole object of studying history is to see in it the workings of the human heart, that is far better studied in the fictitious creations of the great masters of character—in Shakespeare, in Molière, in Fielding, and Scott. Macbeth and Richard are as true to nature as any name in history, and give us an impression of desperate ambition more vivid than the tale of any despot in ancient or modern times. Besides, if we read history only to find in it picturesque incident or subtle shades of character, we run as much chance of stumbling on the worthless and the curious as the noble and the great. A Hamlet is a study in interest perhaps exceeding all others in fiction or in fact, but we shall hardly find that Hamlets have stamped their trace very deep in the history of mankind. There are few lives in all human story more romantic than that of Alcibiades, and none more base. Some minds find fascination in the Popish plots of Titus Oates, where the interest centres round a dastardly ruffian. And the bullies, the fops, the cut-throats, and the Jezebels who crowded the courts of the Stuarts and the Georges, have been consigned to permanent infamy in libraries of learned and of brilliant works.

Brilliant and ingenious writing has been the bane of history; it has degraded its purpose, and perverted many of its uses. Histories have been written which are little but minute pictures of scoundrelism and folly triumphant. Wretches, who if alive now would be consigned to the gallows or the hulks, have only to take, as it is said, a place in history, and generations after generations of learned men will pore over their lives, collect their letters, their portraits, or their books, search out every fact in their lives with prurient inquisitiveness, and chronicle their rascalities in twenty volumes. Such

stories, some may say, have a human interest. So has the *Newgate Calendar* a human interest of a certain kind. Brilliant writing is a most delusive guide. In search of an effective subject for a telling picture, men have wandered into strange and dismal haunts. We none of us choose our friends on such a plan. Why, then, should we choose thus the friends round whom our recollections are to centre? We none of us wish to be intimate with a man simply because he is a picturesque-looking villain, nor do we bring to our firesides men who have the reputation of being the loudest braggarts or keenest sharpers of their time.

Let us pass by untouched these memoirs of the unmemorable—these lives of those who never can be said to have lived. Pass them all: these riotings, intrigues, and affectations of worthless men and worthless ages. Better to know nothing of the past than to know only its follies, though set forth in eloquent language and with attractive anecdote. It does not profit to know the names of all the kings that ever lived, and the catalogue of all their whims and vices, and a minute list of their particular weaknesses, with all their fools, buffoons, mistresses, and valets. Again, some odd incident becomes the subject of the labour of lives, and fills volume after volume of ingenious trifling. Some wretched little squabble is exhumed, unimportant in itself, unimportant for the persons that were engaged in it, trivial in its results. Lives are spent in raking up old letters to show why or how some parasite like Sir T. Overbury was murdered, or to unravel some plot about a maid of honour, or a diamond necklace, or some conspiracy to turn out a minister or to detect some court impostor. There are plenty of things to find out, or, if people are afflicted with a morbid

curiosity, there are Chinese puzzles or chess problems left for them to solve, without ransacking the public records and libraries to discover which out of a nameless crowd was the most unmitigated scoundrel, or who it is that must have the credit of being the author of some peculiarly venomous or filthy pamphlet. Why need we have six immense volumes to prove to the world that you have found the villain, and ask them to read all about him, and explain in brilliant language how some deed of darkness or some deed of folly really was done?

And they call this history. This serving up in spiced dishes of the clean and the unclean, the wholesome and the noxious; this plunging down into the charnel-house of the great graveyard of the past, and stirring up the decaying carcasses of the outcasts and malefactors of the race. No good can come of such work: without plan, without purpose, without breadth of view, and without method; with nothing but a vague desire to amuse, and a morbid craving for novelty. If there is one common purpose running through the whole history of the past, if that history is the story of man's growth in dignity, and power, and goodness, if the gathered knowledge and the gathered conscience of past ages does control us, support us, inspire us, then is this commemorating these parasites and offscourings of the human race worse than pedantry or folly. It is filling us with an unnatural contempt for the greatness of the past—nay, it is committing towards our spiritual forefathers the same crime which Ham committed against his father Noah. It is a kind of sacrilege to the memory of the great men to whom we owe all we prize, if we waste our lives in poring over the acts of the puny creatures who only encumbered *their* path.

Men on the battle-field or in their study, by the labour of their brains or of their hands, have given us what we have, and made us what we are; a noble army who have done battle with barbarism and the powers of nature, martyrs often to their duty; yet we are often invited to turn with indifference from the story of their long march and many victories, to find amusement amidst the very camp-followers and sutlers who hang upon their rear. If history has any lessons, any unity, any plan, let us turn to it for this. Let this be our test of what is history and what is not, that it teaches us something of the advance of human progress, that it tells us of some of those mighty spirits who have left their mark on all time, that it shows us the nations of the earth woven together in one purpose, or is lit up with those great ideas and those great purposes which have kindled the conscience of mankind.

Why is knowledge of any kind useful? It is certainly not true that a knowledge of facts, merely as facts, is desirable. Facts are infinite, and it is not the millionth part of them that is worth knowing. What some people call the pure love of truth often means only a pure love of intellectual fussiness. A statement may be true, and yet wholly worthless. It cannot be all facts which are the subject of knowledge. For instance, a man might learn by heart the *Post-Office Directory*, and a very remarkable mental exercise it would be; but he would hardly venture to call himself a well-informed man. No; we want the facts only which add to our power, or will enable us to act. They only give us knowledge—they only are a part of education. For instance, we begin the study of mathematics; of algebra, or geometry. We hardly expect to turn it to practical account like another Hudibras, who could 'tell the

clock by algebra'; but we do not find Euclid's geometry help us to take the shortest cut to our own house. Our object is to know something of the simplest principles which underlie all the sciences: to understand practically what mathematical demonstration means: to bring home to our minds the conception of scientific axioms.

Again, we study some of the physical laws of nature—plain facts about gravitation, or heat, or light. What we want is to be able to know something of what our modern philosophers are talking about. We want to know why Faraday is a great teacher; to know what it is which seems to affect all nature equally; which brings us down heavily upon the earth as we stumble, and keeps the planets in their orbits. We want to understand what are laws of nature. We take up such pursuits as botany or geology; but then, again, not in order to discover a new medicine, or a gold-field, or a coal-mine. No, we want to know something of the mystery around us. We see intelligible structure, consistent unity, and common laws in the earth on which we live, with the view, I presume, of feeling more at home in it, of becoming more attached to it, of living in it more happily. Some study physiology. We do not expect to discover the elixir of life, like an eminent novelist, nor do we expect to dispense with the aid of the surgeon. We want to get a glimpse of that marvellous framework of the human form, some notion of the laws of its existence, some idea of the powers which affect it, which depress or develop it, some knowledge of the relation of the thinking and feeling process and the thinking and feeling organ. We seek to know something of the influences to which all human nature is subject, to be able to understand what people mean when they tell us about laws of health, or laws of life, or laws of thought.

We want to be in a position to decide for ourselves as to the trustworthiness of men upon whose judgment we depend for bodily existence.

Now, in this list of the subjects of a rational education something is wanting. It is the play of Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark:—

‘The proper study of mankind is man.’

Whilst Man is wanting, all the rest remains vague, and incomplete, and aimless. Mathematics would indeed be a jumble of figures if it ended in itself. But the moment we learn the influence which some great discovery has had on the destinies of man; the moment we note how all human thought was lighted up when Galileo said that the sun, and not the earth, was the centre of our world; the moment we feel that the demonstrations of Euclid are things in which all human minds must agree—indeed, are almost the only things in which all do agree,—that moment the science has a meaning, and a clue, and a plan. It had none so long as it was disconnected from the history and the destiny of man—the past and the future. It is the same with every other science. What would be the meaning of laws of nature, unless by them man could act on nature? What would be the use of knowing the laws of health, unless we supposed that a sounder knowledge of them would ameliorate the condition of men? What, indeed, is the use of the improvement of the mind? It is far from obvious that mere exercise of the intellectual faculties alone is a good. A nation of Hamlets (to take a popular misconception of that character) would be more truly miserable, perhaps more truly despicable, than a nation of Bushmen. By a cultivated mind, a mental training, a sound education, we mean a state of



mind by which we shall become more clear of our condition, of our powers, of our duties towards our fellows, of our true happiness, by which we may make ourselves better citizens and better men—more civilised, in short. The preceding studies have been but a preparation. They have been only to strengthen the mind, and give it material for the true work of education—the inculcation of human duty.

All knowledge is imperfect, we may almost say meaningless, unless it tends to give us sounder notions of our human and social interests. What we need are clear principles about the moral nature of man as a social being; about the elements of human society; about the nature and capacities of the understanding. We want landmarks to guide us in our search after worthy guides, or true principles for social or political action. Human nature is unlike inorganic nature in this, that its varieties are greater, and that it shows continual change. The earth rolls round the sun in the same orbit now as in infinite ages past; but man moves forward in a variable line of progress. Age after age develops into new phases. It is a study of life, of growth, of variety. One generation shows one faculty of human nature in a striking degree; the next exhibits a different power. All, it is true, leave their mark upon all succeeding generations, and civilisation flows on like a vast river, gathering up the waters of its tributary streams. Hence it is that civilisation, being not a fixed or lifeless thing, cannot be studied as a fixed or lifeless subject. We can see it only in its movement and its growth. Except for eclipses, some conjunctions of planets, and minor changes, one year is as good as another to the astronomer; but it is not so to the political observer. He must watch successions, and a

wide field, and compare a long series of events. Hence it is that in all political, all social, all human questions whatever, history is the main resource of the inquirer.

To know what is most really natural to man as a social being, man must be looked at as he appears in a succession of ages, and in very various conditions. To learn the strength or scope of all his capacities together, he must be judged in those successive periods in which each in turn was best brought out. Let no one suppose that he will find all the human institutions and faculties equally well developed, and all in their due proportion and order, by simply looking at the state of civilisation now actually around us. Is it not a monstrous assumption that this world of to-day, so full of misery and discontent, strife and despair, ringing with cries of pain and cries for aid, can really embody forth to us complete and harmonious man? Are there no faculties within him yet fettered, no good instincts still, no high yearnings marred? Have we in this year reached the pinnacle of human perfection, lost nothing that we once had, gained all that we can gain? Surely, by the hopes within us, No! But what is missing may often be seen in the history of the past. There, in the long struggle of man upwards, we may watch Humanity in various moods, and see some now forgotten power, capacity, or art yet destined to good service in the future. One by one we may light on the missing links in the chain which connects all races and all ages in one, or gather up the broken threads that must yet be woven into the complex fabric of life.

There is another side on which history is still more necessary as a guide to consistent and rational action. We need to know not merely what the essential qualities of civilisation and of our social nature really are, but

we require to know the general course in which they are tending. The more closely we look at it, the more distinctly we see that progress moves in a clear and definite path; the development of man is not a casual or arbitrary motion: it moves in a regular and consistent plan. Each part is unfolded in due order—the whole expanding like a single plant. More and more steadily we see each age working out the gifts of the last and transmitting its labours to the next. More and more certain is our sense of being strong only as we wisely use the materials and follow in the track provided by the efforts of mankind. Everything proves how completely that influence surrounds us. Take our material existence alone. The earth's surface has been made, as we know it, mainly by man. It would be uninhabitable by numbers but for the long labours of those who cleared its primeval forests, drained its swamps, first tilled its rank soil. All the inventions on which we depend for existence, the instruments we use, were slowly worked out by the necessities of man in the childhood of the race. We can only modify or add to these. We could not discard all existing machines and construct an entirely new set of industrial implements.

Take our political existence. There again we are equally confined in limits. Our country as a political whole has been formed for us by a long series of wars, struggles, and common efforts. We could not refashion England, or divide it anew, if we tried for a century. Our great towns, our great roads, the local administrations of our counties, were sketched out for us by the Romans fifteen centuries since. Could we undo it if we tried, and make London a country village, or turn Birmingham into the metropolis? Some people think

they could abolish some great institution, such as the House of Lords; but few reformers in this country have proposed to abolish the entire British Constitution. For centuries we endured an archaic law of real property. Such as it was, it was made for us by our feudal ancestors misreading Roman texts. Turn whichever way we will, we shall find our political systems, laws, and administrations to have been provided for us.

The same holds good even more strongly in all moral and intellectual questions. Are we to suppose that whilst our daily life, our industry, our laws, our customs, are controlled by the traditions and materials of the past, our thoughts, our habits of mind, our beliefs, our moral sense, our ideas of right and wrong, our hopes and aspirations, are not just as truly formed by the civilisation in which we have been reared? We are indeed able to transform it, to develop it, and to give it new life and action; but we can only do so as we understand it. Without this all efforts, reforms, and revolutions are in vain. A change is made, but a few years pass over, and all the old causes reappear. There was some unnoticed power which was not touched, and it returns in full force. Take an instance from our own history. Cromwell and his Ironsides, who made the great English Revolution, swept away Monarchy, and Church, and Peers, and thought they were gone for ever! Their great chief dead, the old system returned like a tide, and ended in the orgies of Charles and James. The Catholic Church has been, as it is supposed, staggering in its last agonies now for many centuries. Luther believed he had crushed it. Long before his time it seemed nothing but a lifeless mass of corruption. Pope after Pope has been driven into exile.

Four or five times has the Church seemed utterly crushed. And yet here in this nineteenth century, it puts forth all its old pretensions, and covers its old territory.

In the great French Revolution it seemed, for once, that all extant institutions had been swept away. That devouring fire seemed to have burnt the growth of ages to the very root. Yet a few years pass, and all reappear—Monarchy, Church, Peers, Jesuits, Empire, and Prætorian guards. Again and again they are overthrown. Again and again they rise in greater pomp and pride. They who, with courage, energy, and enthusiasm too seldom imitated, sixty years ago carried the Reform of Parliament and swept away with a strong hand abuse and privilege, believed that a new era was opening for their country. What would they think now? When they abolished rotten boroughs, and test acts, and curtailed expenditure, little did they think that sixty years would find their descendants wrangling about Church Establishments, appealing to the House of Lords as a bulwark of freedom, and spending ninety millions a year. The experience of every one who was ever engaged in any public movement whatever reminds him that every step made in advance seems too often wrung back from him by some silent and unnoticed power; he has felt enthusiasm give way to despair, and hopes become nothing but recollections.

What is this unseen power which seems to undo the best human efforts, as if it were some overbearing weight against which no man can long struggle? What is this ever-acting force which seems to revive the dead, to restore what we destroy, to renew forgotten watch-words, exploded fallacies, discredited doctrines, and condemned institutions; against which enthusiasm, intel-

lect, truth, high purpose, and self-devotion seem to beat themselves to death in vain? It is the Past. It is the accumulated wills and works of all mankind around us and before us. It is civilisation. It is that power which to understand is strength, which to repudiate is weakness. Let us not think that there can be any real progress made which is not based on a sound knowledge of the living institutions and the active wants of mankind. If we can only act on nature so far as we know its laws, we can only influence society so far as we understand its elements and ways. Let us not delude ourselves into thinking that new principles of policy or social action can be created by themselves or can reconstruct society about us. Those rough maxims, which we are wont to dignify by the name of principles, may be, after all, only crude formulas and phrases without life or power. Only when they have been tested, analysed, and compared with other phases of social life, can we be certain that they are immutable truths. Nothing but a thorough knowledge of the social system, based upon a regular study of its growth, can give us the power we require to affect it. For this end we need one thing above all—we need history.

It may be said—all this may be very useful for statesmen, or philosophers, or politicians; but what is the use of this to the bulk of the people? They are not engaged in solving political questions. The bulk of the people, if they are seeking to live the lives of rational and useful citizens, if they only wish to do their duty by their neighbours, are really and truly politicians. They are solving political problems, and are affecting society very deeply. A man does not need even to be a vestryman, he need not even have one out of the 500,000 votes for London, in order to exercise very great

political influence. A man, provided he lives like an honest, thoughtful, truth-speaking citizen, is a power in the state. He is helping to form that which rules the state, which rules statesmen, and is above kings, parliaments, or ministers. He is forming *public opinion*. It is on this, a public opinion, wise, thoughtful, and consistent, that the destinies of our country rest, and not on acts of parliament, or movements, or institutions.

It is sheer presumption to attempt to remodel existing institutions, without the least knowledge how they were formed, or whence they grew; to deal with social questions without a thought how society arose; to construct a social creed without an idea of fifty creeds which have risen and vanished before. Few men would, intentionally, attempt so much; but many do it unconsciously. They think they are not statesmen, or teachers, or philosophers; but, in one sense, they are. In all human affairs there is this peculiar quality. They are the work of the combined labours of many. 'No statesman or teacher can do anything alone. He must have the minds of those he is to guide prepared for him. They must concur, or he is powerless. In reality, he is but the expression of their united wills and thoughts. Hence it is, I say, that all men need, in some sense, the knowledge and the judgment of the statesman and the social teacher. Progress is but the result of our joint public opinion; and for progress that opinion must be enlightened. 'He only destroys who can replace.' All other progress than this—one based on the union of many minds and purposes, and a true conception of the future and the past—is transitory and delusive. Those who defy this power, the man, the party, or the class who forget it, will be beating themselves in vain against

## THE USE OF HISTORY

a wall ; changing, but not improving ; moving, but not advancing ; rolling, as the poet says of a turbulent city, like a sick man on the restless bed of pain.

The value of a knowledge of history being admitted, there follows the complicated problem of how to acquire it. There are oceans of facts, mountains of books. This is the question before us. It is possible to know something of history without a pedantic erudition. Let a man ask himself always what he wants to know. Something of man's social nature ; something of the growth of civilisation. He needs to understand something of the character of the great races and systems of mankind. Let him ask himself what the long ages of the early empires did for mankind ; whether they established or taught anything ; if fifty centuries of human skill, labour, and thought were wasted like an autumn leaf. Let him ask himself what the Greeks taught or discovered : why the Romans were a noble race, and how they printed their footmarks so deeply on the earth. Let him ask what was the original meaning and life of those great feudal institutions of chivalry and church, of which we see only the remnants. Let him ask what was the strength, the weakness, and the meaning of the great revolution of Cromwell, or the great revolution in France. A man may learn much true history, without any very ponderous books. Let him go to the museums and see the pictures, the statues, and buildings of Egyptian and Assyrian times, and try to learn what was the state of society under which men in the far East reached so high a pitch of industry, knowledge, and culture, three thousand years before our savage ancestors had learned to use the plough. A man may go to one of our Gothic cathedrals, and, seeing there the stupendous grandeur of its outline, the exquisite grace



of its design, the solemn expression upon the faces of its old carved or painted saints, kings, and priests, may ask himself if the men who built that could be utterly barbarous, false-hearted, and tyrannical; or if the power which could bring out such noble qualities of the human mind and heart must not have left its trace upon mankind.

It does not need many books to know something of the life of the past. A man who has mastered the lives in old Plutarch knows not a little of Greek and Roman history. A man who has caught the true spirit of the Middle Ages knows something of feudalism and chivalry. But is this enough? Far from it. These desultory thoughts must be connected. These need to be combined into a whole, and combined and used for a purpose. Above all, we must look on history as a whole, trying to find what each age and race has contributed to the common stock, and how and why each followed in its place. Looked at separately, all is confusion and contradiction; looked at as a whole, a common purpose appears. The history of the human race is the history of a growth. It can no more be taken to pieces than the human frame can be taken to pieces. Who would think of making anything of the body without knowing whether it possessed a circulation, a nervous system, or a skeleton. History is a living whole. If one organ be removed, it is nothing but a lifeless mass. What we have to find in it is the relation and connection of the parts. We must learn how age develops into age, how country reacts upon country, how thought inspires action, and action modifies thought.

Once conceive that all the greater periods of history have had a real and necessary part to fulfil in creating the whole, and we shall have done more to understand

it than if we had studied some portion of it with a microscope. Once feel that all the parts are needed for the whole, and the difficulty of the mass of materials vanishes. We shall come to regard it as a composition or a work of art which cannot be broken up into fragments at pleasure. We should as soon think of dividing it as of taking a figure out of a great picture, or a passage out of a piece of music. We all know those noble choruses of Handel, such as that 'Unto us a child is born,' and have heard the opening notes begin simple, subdued, and slow, until they are echoed back in deeper tones, choir answering to choir, voice joining in with voice, growing fuller and stronger with new and varying bursts of melody, until the whole stream of song swells into one vast tide of harmony, and rolls on abounding, wave upon wave in majestic exultation and power. Something like this complex harmony is seen in the gathering parts of human history, age taking up the falling notes from age, race joining with race in answering strain, until the separate parts are mingled in one, and pour on in one movement together.

There is one mode in which history may be most easily, perhaps most usefully, approached. Let him who desires to find profit in it, begin by knowing something of the lives of great men. Not of those most talked about, not of names chosen at hazard; but of the real great ones who can be shown to have left their mark upon distant ages. Know their lives, not merely as interesting studies of character, or as persons seen in a drama, but as they represent and influence their age. Not for themselves only must we know them, but as the expression and types of all that is noblest around them. Let us know those whom all men cannot fail to recognise as great—the Cæsars, the Charlemagnes, the Alfreds.

the Cromwells, great in themselves, but greater as the centre of the efforts of thousands.

We have done much towards understanding the past when we have learned to value and to honour such men. It is almost better to know nothing of history than to know with the narrow coldness of a pedant a record which ought to fill us with emotion and reverence. Our closest friends, our earliest teachers, our parents themselves, are not more truly our benefactors than they. To them we owe what we prize most—country, freedom, peace, knowledge, art, thought, and higher sense of right and wrong. What a tale of patience, courage, sacrifice, and martyrdom is the history of human progress! It affects us as if we were reading in the diary of a parent the record of his struggles for his children. For us they toiled, endured, bled, and died; that we by their labour might have rest, by their thoughts might know, by their death might live happily. For whom did these men work, if not for us? Not for themselves, when they gave up peace, honour, life, reputation itself—as when the great French republican exclaimed, ‘May my name be accursed, so that France be free!’ not for themselves they worked, but for their cause, for their fellows, for us. Not that they might have fame, but that they might leave the world better than they found it. This supported Milton in his old age, blind, poor, and dishonoured, when he poured out his spirit in solitude, full of grace, tenderness, and hope, amidst the ruin of all he loved and the obscene triumph of all he despised. It supported Dante, the poet of Florence, when an outlaw and an exile he was cast off by friends and countrymen, and wandered about begging his bread from city to city, pondering the great thoughts which live throughout all Europe. This spirit, too, was in one, the noblest victim

of the French Revolution, the philosopher Condorcet; who, condemned, hunted to death, devoted the last few days of his life to serene thought of the past, and, whilst the pursuers were on his track, wrote in his hiding-place that noble sketch of the progress of the human race.

## CHAPTER II

### THE CONNECTION OF HISTORY

LET us now try to sketch the outline of this story, link century to century, continent to continent, and judge the share each has in the common work of civilisation. To do so, we must go back to ages long before records began. It is but of the latter and the shorter portion of the duration of progress, that any record has been made or preserved. Yet for a general view, sufficient materials of certain knowledge exist. If we write the biography of a man we do not begin with the year of his life in which his diary opens; we seek to know his parentage, education, and early association. To understand him we must do so. So, too, the biography of mankind must not confine itself to the eras of chronological tables, and of recorded events. In all large instances the civilisation of an epoch or a people has a certain unity in it—their philosophy, their policy, their habits, and their religion must more or less accord, and all depend at last upon the special habit of their minds. It is this central form of belief which determines all the rest. Separately no item which makes up their civilisation as a whole, can be long or seriously changed. It is what a man believes, which makes him act as he does. Thus shall we see that, as their reasoning powers develop, all else develops likewise; their science, their art break up or take new forms; their system of society expands; their life, their

morality, and their religion gradually are dissolved and reconstructed.

Let us, then, place ourselves back in imagination at a period when the whole surface of the earth was quite unlike what it is now. Let us suppose it as it was after the last great geologic change—the greater portion of its area covered with primeval forests, vast swamps, dense jungles, moors, prairies, and arid deserts. We must not suppose that the earth had always the same face as now. Such as it is, it has been made by man; the rich pasturages and open plains have all been created by his toil—even the grain, and fruits, and flowers that grow upon its soil have been made what they are by his care. Their originals were what we now should regard as small, valueless, insipid berries or weeds. As yet the now teeming valleys of the great rivers, such as the Nile, or the Euphrates, or the Po, were wildernesses or swamps. The rich meadows of our own island were marshes; where its cornfields stand now, were trackless forests or salt fens. Such countries as Holland were swept over by every tide of the sea, and such countries as Switzerland, and Norway, and large parts of America, or Russia, were submerged beneath endless pine-woods. And through these forests and wastes ranged countless races of animals, many, doubtless, long extinct, in variety and numbers more than we can even conceive.

Where in this terrible world was man? Scanty in number, confined to a few favourable spots, dispersed, and alone, man sustained a precarious existence, not yet the lord of creation, inferior to many quadrupeds in strength, only just superior to them in mind—nothing but the first of the brutes. As are the lowest of all savages now, no doubt even lower, man once was. Conceive what Robinson Crusoe would have been had his

island been a dense jungle overrun with savage beasts, without his gun, or his knife, or his knowledge, with nothing but his human hand and his human brain. Ages have indeed passed since then—at least some twenty thousand years—possibly twice or thrice twenty thousand. But they should not be quite forgotten, and all recollection perish of that dark time when man waged a struggle for life or death with nature. Let us be just to those who fought that fight with the brutes, hunted down and exterminated step by step the races too dangerous to man, and cleared the ground of these monstrous rivals. Every nation has its primeval heroes, whose hearts quailed not before the lion or the dragon: its Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the Lord, its Hercules, whose club smote the serpent Hydra, its Odin, who slew monsters. The forests, moreover, had to be cleared. Step by step man won his way into the heart of those dark jungles; slowly the rank vegetation was swept off; here and there a space was cleared, here and there a plain was formed which left a patch of habitable soil.

Everywhere man began as a hunter, without implements, without clothing, without homes, perhaps without the use of fire. Man's supremacy over the brutes was first asserted when his mind taught him how to make the rude bow, or the flint knife, or to harden clay or wood by heat. But not only were all the arts and uses of life yet to be found, but all the human institutions had to be formed. As yet language, family, marriage, property, tribe, were not, or only were in germ. A few cries assisted by gesture, a casual association of the sexes, a dim trace of parentage or brotherhood, a joint tenure by those who dwelt together, were all that was. Language, as we know it, has been slowly built up, stage after stage,

by the instinct of the entire race. Necessity led to new sounds, which use developed; sounds became words, words were worked into sentences, and half-brutish cries grew into intelligible speech. Our earliest teachers were those whose higher instincts first taught men to unite in permanent pairs, to group the children of one home, to form into parties and companies, to clothe themselves, and put checks upon the violent passions. They who first drew savage man out of the life of unbridled instinct and brutal loneliness; who founded the practices of personal decency and cleanliness; who first taught men to be faithful and tender to the young and the old, the woman, and the mother; who first brought these wild hunters together, and made them trust each other and their chief—these were the first great benefactors of mankind; this is the beginning of the history of the race.

When such was the material and moral condition of man, what was his intellectual condition? what were his knowledge, his worship, and his religion? Turn to the earliest traditions of men, to the simple ideas of childhood, and especially to the savage tribes we know, and we have the answer. Man's intellect was far feebler than his activity or his feelings. He knew nothing, he rested in the first imagination. He reasoned on nothing, he supposed everything. He looked upon nature, and saw it full of life, motion, and strength. He knew what struggles he had with it; he felt it often crush him, he felt he could often mould it; and he thought that all, brutes, plants, rivers, storms, forests, and mountains, were powers, living, feeling, and acting like himself. Do not the primeval legends, the fairy tales of all nations, show it to us? Does not the child punish its doll, and the savage defy the thunder, and the horse



start at a gnarled oak swaying its boughs like arms in the wind? Man then looked out upon nature, and thought it a living thing—a simple belief which answered all questions. He knew nothing of matter, or elements, or laws. His celestial and his terrestrial philosophy was summed up in this—things act so because they choose. He never asked why [the sun or moon rose and set. They were bright beings who walked their own paths when and as they pleased. He never thought why a volcano smoked, or a river overflowed; or thought only that the one was wroth and roared, and that the other had started in fury from his bed.

And what was his religion? What could it but be? Affection for the fruits and flowers of the earth—dread and prostration before the terrible in nature—worship of the bright sun, of sheltering grove, or mountain—in a word, the adoration of nature, the untutored impulse towards the master powers around. As yet nothing was fixed, nothing common. Each worshipped in love or dread what most seized his fancy; each family had its own fetishes; each tribe its stones or mountains; often it worshipped its own dead—friends who had begun a new existence: who appeared to them in dreams, and were thought to haunt the old familiar spots. Such was their religion, the unguided faith of childhood, exaggerating all the feelings and sympathies, stimulating love, and hatred, and movement, and destruction, but leaving everything vague, giving no fixity, no unity, no permanence. In such a condition, doubtless, man passed through many thousand years: tribe struggling with tribe in endless battles for their hunting grounds; often, we may fear, devouring their captives; without any fixed abode, or definite association, or material progress; yet gradually forming the various arts

and, institutions of life, gradually learning the use of clothes, of metals, of implements, of speech—a race whose life depended solely upon the chase, whose only society was the tribe, whose religion was the worship of natural objects.

In this first struggle with nature, man was not long quite alone. Slowly he won over to his side one or two of the higher animals. This wonderful victory assured his ultimate ascendancy. The dog was won from his wolf-like state to join and aid in the chase. The horse bowed his strength in generous submission to a master. We do not reflect enough upon the efforts that this cost. We are forgetful of the wonders of patience, gentleness, sympathy, sagacity, and nerve, which were required for the first domestication of animals. We may reflect upon the long centuries of care which were needed to change the very nature of these noble brutes, without whom we should indeed be helpless. By degrees the ox, the sheep, the goat, the hog, the camel, and the ass, with horse and dog, were reared by man, formed part of his simple family, and became the lower portion of the tribe. Their very natures, their external forms, were changed. Milk and its compounds formed the basis of food. The hunter's life became less precarious, less rambling, less violent. In short, the second great stage of human existence began, and pastoral life commenced.

With the institution of pastoral—a modified form of nomad—life, a great advance was made in civilisation. Larger tribes could now collect, for there was now no lack of food; tribes gathered into a horde; something like society began. It had its leaders, its elders, perhaps its teachers, poets, and wise men. Men ceased to rove for ever. They stayed upon a favourable pasture for long periods together. Next, property—that is, instruments,

valuables, and means of subsistence—began; flocks and herds accumulated; men were no longer torn daily by the wants of hunger; and leisure, repose, and peace were possible. The women were relieved from the crushing toil of the past. The old were no longer abandoned or neglected through want. Reflection, observation, thought began; and with thought, religion. As life became more fixed, worship became less vague and more specific. Some fixed, great powers alone were adored, chiefly the host of heaven, the stars, the moon, and the great sun itself. Then some elder, freed from toil or war, meditating on the world around him, as he watched the horde start forth at the rising of the sun, the animals awakening and nature opening beneath his rays, first came to think all nature moved at the will of that sun himself, perhaps even of some mysterious power of whom that sun was but the image. From this would rise a regular worship common to the whole horde, uniting them together, explaining their course of life, stimulating their powers of thought.

With this some kind of knowledge commenced. Their vast herds and flocks needed to be numbered, distinguished, and separated. Arithmetic began; the mode of counting, of adding and subtracting, was slowly worked out. The horde's course, also, must be directed by the seasons and the stars. Hence astronomy began. The course of the sun was steadily observed, the recurrence of the seasons noted. Slowly the first ideas of order, regularity, and permanence arose. The world was no longer a chaos of conflicting forces. The earth had its stated times, governed by the all-ruling sun. Now, too, the horde had a permanent existence. Its old men could remember the story of its wanderings and the deeds of its mighty ones, and would tell them

to the young when the day was over. Poetry, narrative, and history had begun. Leisure brought the use of fresh implements. Metals were found and worked. The loom was invented; the wheeled car came into use; the art of the smith, the joiner, and the boat-builder. New arts required a subdivision of labour, and division of labour required orderly rule. Society had begun. A greater step was yet at hand. Around some sacred mountain or grave, in some more favoured spot, where the horde would longest halt or oftenest return, some greater care to clear the ground, to protect the pasture, and to tend the plants was shown; some patches of soil were scratched to grow some useful grains, some wild corn ears were cultivated into wheat, the earth began to be tilled. Man passed into the third great stage of material existence, and agriculture began.

Agriculture once commenced, a new era was at hand. Now organised society was possible. We must regard this stage as the greatest effort towards progress ever accomplished by mankind. We must remember how much had to be learnt, how many arts had to be invented, before the savage hunter could settle down into the peaceful, the provident, and the intelligent husbandman. What is all our vaunted progress to this great step? What are all our boasted inventions compared with the first great discoveries of man, the spinning-wheel and loom, the plough, the clay-vessel, the wheel, the boat, the bow, the hatchet, and the forge? Surely, if we reflect, our inventions are chiefly modes of multiplying or saving force; these were the transformations of substances, or the interchange of force. Ours are, for the most part, but expansions of the first idea; these are the creations.

Since it is with agriculture solely that organised society begins, it is with justice that the origin of civilisation is always traced to those great plains where alone agriculture was then possible. It was in the basins of the great Asian rivers, the Euphrates, the Tigris, the Indus, the Ganges, the Yang-tse-kiang, and in that of the Nile, that fixed societies began. There, where irrigation is easy, the soil rich, the country open, cultivation arose, and with cultivation of the soil the accumulation of its produce, and, with more easy sustenance, leisure, thought, and observation. Use taught man to distinguish between matter and life, man and brute, thought and motion. Men's eyes were opened, and they saw that nature was not alive, and had no will. They watched the course of the sun, and saw that it moved in fixed ways. They watched the sea, and saw that it rose and fell by tides. Then, too, they needed knowledge and they needed teachers. They needed men to measure their fields, their barns, to teach them to build strongly, to calculate the seasons for them, to predict the signs of the weather, to expound the will of the great powers who ruled them. Thus slowly rose the notion of gods, the unseen rulers of these powers of earth and sky—a god of the sea, of the river, of the sky, of the sun; and between them and their gods rose the first priests, the ministers and interpreters of their will, and polytheism and theocracies began.

Thus simply amidst these great settled societies of the plain began the great human institution, the priesthood—at first only wiser elders who had some deeper knowledge of the arts of settled life. Gradually knowledge advanced; knowledge of the seasons and of the stars or of astronomy, of enumeration or arithmetic,

of measurement or geometry, of medicine and surgery, of building, of the arts, of music, of poetry; gradually this knowledge became deposited in the hands of a few, was accumulated and transmitted from father to son. The intellect asserted its power, and the rule over a peaceful and industrious race slowly passed into the hands of a priesthood, or an educated and sacred class. These were the men who founded the earliest form of civilised existence; the most complete, the most enduring, the most consistent of all human societies, the great theocracies or religious societies of Asia and Egypt. Thus for thousands of years before the earliest records of history, in all the great plains of Asia and along the Nile, nations flourished in a high and elaborate form of civilisation. We will examine one only, the best known to us, the type, the earliest and the greatest—the Egyptian.

The task to be accomplished was immense. It was nothing less than the foundation of permanent and organised society. Till this was done all was in danger. All knowledge might be lost, the arts might perish, the civil community might break up. Hitherto there had been no permanence, no union, no system. What was needed was to form the intellectual and material framework of a fixed nation. And this the Egyptian priesthood undertook. The spot was favourable to the attempt. In that great, rich plain, walled off on all sides by the desert or by the sea, it was possible to found a society at once industrial, peaceful, and settled. They needed judges to direct them, teachers to instruct them, men of science to help them, governors to rule them, preachers to admonish them, physicians to heal them, artists to train them, and priests to sacrifice for them. To meet these wants a special order of men spontaneously arose,

by whose half-conscious efforts a complete system of society was gradually and slowly formed. In their hands was concentrated the whole intellectual product of ages; this they administered for the common good.

Gradually, by their care there arose a system of regular industry. To this end they divided out by their superior skill all the arts and trades of life. Each work was apportioned, each art had its subordinate arts. Then as a mode of perpetuating skill in crafts, to insure a sound apprenticeship of every labour, they caused or enabled each man's work to become hereditary within certain broad limits, and thus created or sanctioned a definite series of castes. To give sanction to the whole, they consecrated each labour, and made each workman's toil a part of his religious duty. Then they organised a scheme of general education. They provided a system of teaching common to all, adapted to the work of each. They provided for the special education of the sacred class in the whole circle of existing knowledge: they collected observations, they treasured up discoveries, and recorded events. Next they organised a system of government. They established property, they divided out the land, they set up landmarks, they devised rules for its tenure, they introduced law, and magistrates, and governors; provinces were divided into districts, towns, and villages; violence was put down, a strict police exercised, regular taxes imposed. Next they organised a system of morality; the social, the domestic, and the personal duties were minutely defined; practices relating to health, cleanliness, and temperance were enforced by religious obligations: every act of life, every moment of existence, was made a part of sacred duty. Lastly, they organised national life by a vast

system of common religious rites, having imposing ceremonies which awakened the imagination and kindled the emotions, bound up the whole community into an united people, and gave stability to their national existence, by the awful sense of a common and mysterious belief.

If we want to know what such a system of life was like, let us go into some museum of Egyptian antiquities, where we may see representations of their mode of existence carved upon their walls. There we may see nearly all the arts of life as we know them—weaving and spinning, working in pottery, glass-blowing, building, carving, and painting; ploughing, sowing, threshing, and gathering into barns; boating, irrigation, fishing, wine-pressing, dancing, singing, and playing—a vast community, in short, orderly, peaceful, and intelligent; capable of gigantic works and of refined arts, before which we are lost in wonder: a civilised community busy and orderly as a hive of bees, amongst whom every labour and function was arranged in perfect harmony and distinctness: all this may be seen upon monuments 5000 years old.

Here, then, we have civilisation itself. All the arts of life had been brought to perfection, and indelibly implanted on the mind of men so that they could never be utterly lost. All that constitutes orderly government, the institutions of society, had been equally graven into human existence. A check had been placed upon the endless and desultory warfare of tribes; and great nations existed. The ideas of domestic life, marriage, filial duty, care for the aged and the dead, had become a second nature. The wholesome practices of social life, of which we think so lightly, had all been invented and established. The



practice of regular holidays, social gatherings, and common celebrations began—the record and division of past ages, the exact times of the seasons, of the year, the months and its festivals; the great yet little-prized institution of the week. Nor were the gains to thought less. In the peaceful rolling on of those primeval ages, observations had been stored up by an unbroken succession of priests, without which science never would have existed. It was no small feat in science first to have determined the exact length of the year. It needed observations stretching over a cycle of 1500 years. But the Egyptian priests had enumerated the stars, and could calculate for centuries in advance the times of their appearance. They possessed the simpler processes of arithmetic and geometry; they knew something of chemistry, and much of botany, and even a little of surgery. There was one invention yet more astonishing; the Egyptians invented, the Phœnicians popularised, the art of writing, and transmitted the alphabet—our alphabet—to the Greeks. A truly amazing intellectual effort was required for the formation of the alphabet; not to shape the forms, but first to conceive that the complex sounds we utter could be classified, and reduced down to those simple elements we call the letters. We can imagine hardly any effort of abstract thought more difficult than this, and certainly none more essential to the progress of the human mind.

They had indeed great minds who did all this; for they did not so much promote civilisation as create it. Never perhaps before or since has any order of men received this universal culture; never perhaps has any order shown this many-sided activity and strength. Never before or since has such power been concentrated

in the same hands—the entire moral and material control over Society. They had great minds, great souls also, who could conceive and carry through such a task—greater perhaps in this that they did not care to celebrate themselves for posterity, but passed away when their work was done, contented to have seen it done, as Moses did when he went up alone to die in secret, that no man might know or worship at his tomb. The debt we owe these men and these times is great. It is said that man learns more in the first year of his childhood than in any year subsequently of his life. And in this long childhood of the world, how many things were learnt! Is it clear that they could have been learnt in any other way? Caste, in its decline, is the most degrading of human institutions. It is doubtful if without it the arts of life could have been taught and preserved in those unsettled ages of war and migration. We rebel justly against all priestly tyranny over daily life and customs. It is probable that without these sanctions of religion and law, the rules of morality, of decency, and health could never have been imposed upon the lawless instincts of mankind. We turn with repugnance from the monotony of those unvarying ages, and of that almost stagnant civilisation; but are we sure that without it, it would have been possible to collect the observations of distant ages, and the records of dynasties and eras on which all science and all history rest? would it have been possible to provide a secure and tranquil field in which the slow growth of language, art, and thought could have worked out, generation after generation, their earliest and most difficult result?

No form of civilisation has ever endured so long; its consequences are stamped deeply still upon our daily

life; yet the time came when even these venerable systems must die.

— Their work was done, and it was time for them to pass away. Century after century had gone by, teaching the same lessons, but adding nothing new. Human life began to be stifled in these primeval forms. The whole empire of the priests grew evil and corrupt. We know them chiefly in their decline, when kings and conquerors had usurped and perverted the patient energies of these long-tutored peoples. These great societies passed from industrial and social communities into stupendous tyrannies, made up of cruelty and pride. It was the result of the great and fatal error which lay beneath the whole priestly system. They had misconceived their strength and their knowledge. They had undertaken to organise society whilst their own knowledge was feeble and imperfect. They had tried to establish the rule of mind, of all rules the most certainly destined to fail, and they based that rule upon error and misconception. They pretended to govern society instead of confining themselves to the only possible task, to teach it. They who had begun by securing progress, now were its worst obstacles. They who began to rule by the right of intelligence, now dreaded and crushed intelligence. They fell as every priesthood has fallen which has ever based its claims upon imperfect knowledge, or pretended to command in the practical affairs of life. Yet there was only one way in which the nightmare of this intellectual and social oppression could be shaken off, and these strong systems broken up. It was no doubt by the all-powerful instinct of conquest, and by the growth of vast military monarchies, that the change was accomplished. Those antique societies of peace and industry

degenerated at last into conquering empires ; and, during the thousand years which precede the Persian empire, Asia was swept from side to side by the armies of Assyrian, Median, Babylonian, and Egyptian conquerors. Empire after empire rose and fell with small result, save that they broke the death-like sleep of ages, and brought distant people from the ends of the earth into contact with each other.

The researches and discoveries of our own generation have thrown much light on these Asiatic kingdoms, and many names and events have been sufficiently identified. But no regular and authentic history of the tracts enclosed between the Black Sea, the Caspian, the Mediterranean, and the Persian Gulf has yet become possible ; nor has our general conception of the civilisation of these Asiatic monarchies been modified in essential features. From time to time we find traces of efforts made by independent peoples, Arabs, Syrians, Phœnicians, and Jews, to free themselves from the pressure of the *régime* of caste and of the military empires. Of these efforts the Jewish nationality is, from the moral and spiritual point of view, far the most important. From the practical and material point of view, the most important is undoubtedly the Phœnician. These two most interesting peoples may be traced for eight or ten centuries before they were both absorbed in the Persian empire, making heroic and persevering efforts to found a new type of society, or to develop the arts and resources of civilised life. The Jewish nation, though its subsequent influence on the conscience and imagination of mankind has made it of such transcendent interest to us in a later age, was too small, too feebly seated, and with too little of practical genius, to produce any decisive effect on the general course of civil organisation.

That very remarkable people, the Phœnicians, did more to that end. Their wonderful enterprise and indomitable nature, their seats on the shores of the Mediterranean and the possession of maritime strongholds, with their unique aptitude for the sea in the early ages, enabled them to play a most important part in the evolution of human civilisation. They did what Venice did in the Middle Ages and Holland in subsequent times. They carried the arts, inventions, and products of the various continents and zones of climate over the whole known world from Britain to Ceylon. But they were too much dispersed, too mobile, and too defective in military and political genius to confront a great empire, and they successively fell before the Assyrian, Babylonish, and Egyptian conquerors. Their arts, their trade, their naval supremacy, passed to the inhabitants of Western seaboard, islands, and more sheltered bays.

The world seemed in danger of perishing by exhaustion. It needed a new spirit to revive it. But now another race appears upon the scene; a branch of that great Aryan people, who from the high lands of central Asia have swept over Assyria, India, and Europe, the people who as Greeks, Romans, Gauls, or Teutons have been the foremost of mankind, of whom we ourselves are but a younger branch. Now, too, the darkness which covered those earlier ages of the world rolls off: accurate history begins, and the drama proceeds in the broad light of certainty.

\* It is about 550 B.C. that the first great name in general history appears. Cyrus founds the Persian empire. For ages, along the mountain slopes between the Hindoo Koosh and the Caspian Sea, the Persian race had remained a simple horde of wandering herdsmen, apart

from the vast empires of Babylon and Nineveh in the plains below. There they grew up with nobler and freer thoughts, not crushed by the weight of a powerful monarchy, not degraded by decaying superstitions, nor enervated by material riches. They honoured truth, freedom, and energy. They had faith in themselves and their race. They valued morality more than ceremonies. They believed in a Supreme Power of the universe. Just as the northern nations afterwards poured over the Roman empire, so these stronger tribes were preparing to descend upon the decaying remains of the Asiatic empires. They needed only a captain, and they found one worthy of the task in the great King Cyrus.

Marshalling his mountain warriors into a solid army, Cyrus swept down upon the plains, and one by one the empires fell before him, until from the Mediterranean to the Indus, from Tartary to the Arabian Gulf, all Asia submitted to his sway. His successors continued his work, pushing across Arabia, Egypt, Africa, and Northern Asia itself. There over that enormous tract they built up the Persian monarchy, which swallowed up and fused into one so many ancient empires. The conquerors were soon absorbed, like the Northmen, into the theocratic faith and life of the conquered; and throughout half of the then inhabited globe one rule, one religion, one system of life alone existed. But the Persian kings could not rest, whilst a corner remained unconquered. On the shores of the Mediterranean they had come upon a people who had defied them with strange audacity. Against them the whole weight of the Asian empire was put forth. For ten years fleets and armies were preparing. There came archers from the wastes of Tartary and the deserts of Africa:

charioteers from Nineveh and Babylon; horsemen, clubmen, and spearmen; the mailed footmen of Persia; the fleets of the Phœnicians; all the races of the East gathered in one vast host, and, as legend said, 5,000,000 men and 2000 ships poured over the Eastern seas upon the devoted people.

And who were they who seemed thus doomed? Along the promontories and islands of the eastern Mediterranean there dwelt the scattered race whom we call Greeks, who had gradually worked out a form of life totally differing from the old, who had wonderfully expanded the old arts of life and modes of thought. With them the destinies of the world then rested for all its future progress. With them all was life, change, and activity. Broken into sections by infinite bays, mountains, and rivers, scattered over a long line of coasts and islands, the Greek race, with natures as varied as their own beautiful land, as restless as their own seas, had never been moulded into one great solid empire, and early threw off the weight of a ruling caste of priests. No theocracy or religious system of society ever could establish itself amidst a race so full of life and motion, exposed to influences from without, divided within. They had borrowed the arts of life from the great Eastern peoples, and, in borrowing, had wonderfully improved them. The alphabet, shipbuilding, commerce, they had from the Phœnicians; architecture, sculpture, painting, from the Assyrian or Lydian empires. Geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, they had borrowed from the Egyptians. The various fabrics, arts, and appliances of the East came to them in profusion across the seas. Their earliest lawgivers, rulers, and philosophers had all travelled through the great Asian kingdom, and came back to their small country

with a new sense of all the institutions and ideas of civilised life.

The Greeks borrowed, they did not imitate. Alone as yet, they had thrown off the tyranny of custom, of caste, of kingcraft, and of priestcraft. They only had moulded the ponderous column and the uncouth colossus of the East into the graceful shaft and the life-like figure of the gods. They only had dared to think freely, to ask themselves what or whence was this earth, to meet the problems of abstract thought, to probe the foundations of right and wrong. Lastly, they alone had conceived the idea of a people not the servants of one man or of a class, not chained down in a rigid order of submission, but the free and equal citizens of a republic; for on them first had dawned the idea of a civilised community in which men should be not masters and slaves, but brothers.

On poured the myriads of Asia, creating a famine as they marched, drying up the streams, and covering the seas with their ships. Who does not know the tale of that immortal effort—how the Athenians armed old and young, burned their city, and went on board their ships—how for three days Leonidas and his three hundred held the pass against the Asian host, and lay down, each warrior at his post, calmly smiling in death—how the Greek ships lay in ambush in their islands, for the mighty fleet of Persia—how the unwieldy mass was broken and pierced by its dauntless enemy—how, all day the battle raged beneath the eyes of the great king himself, and, at its close, the seas were heaving with the wrecks of the shattered host. Of all the battles in history, this one of Salamis was the most precious to the human race. No other tale of war can surpass it. For in that war the heroism, the genius, the



marvellous audacity shown by these pigmy fleets and armies of a small, weak race, withstood and crushed the entire power of Asia, and preserved from extinction the life and intellect of future ages.

Victory followed upon victory, and the whole Greek race expanded with this amazing triumph. The old world had been brought face to face with the intellect which was to transform it. The Greek mind, with the whole East open to it, exhibited inexhaustible activity. A century sufficed to develop a thoroughly new phase of civilisation. They carried the arts to a height whereon they stand as the types for all time. In poetry they exhausted and perfected every form of composition. In politics they built up a multitude of communities, rich with a prolific store of political and social institutions. Throughout their stormy history stand forth great names. Now and then there rose amongst them leaders of real genius. For a time they showed some splendid instances of public virtue, of social life, patriotism, elevation, sagacity, and energy. For a moment Athens at least may have believed that she had reached the highest type of political existence. But with all this activity and greatness there was no true unity. Wonderful as was their ingenuity, their versatility and energy, it was too often wasted in barren struggles and wanton restlessness. For a century and a half after the Persian invasion, the petty Greek states contended in one weary round of contemptible civil wars and aimless revolutions. One after another they cast their great men aside, to think out by themselves the thoughts that were to live for all time, and gave themselves up to be the victims of degraded adventurers. For one moment only in their history, if indeed for that, they did become a nation. At last, wearied

out by endless wars and constant revolutions, the Greek states by force and fraud were fused in one people by the Macedonian kings; and by Macedon, instead of by true Hellas, the great work so long postponed, but through their history never forgotten, was at length attempted—the work of avenging the Persian invasion, and subduing Asia.

Short and wonderful was that career of conquest, due wholly to one marvellous mind. Alexander, indeed, in military and practical genius seems to stand above all Greeks, as Cæsar above all Romans; they two the greatest chiefs of the ancient world. No story in history is so romantic as the tale of that ten years of victory when Alexander, at the head of some thirty thousand veteran Greeks, poured over Asia, crushing army after army, taking city after city, and receiving the homage of prince after prince, himself fighting like a knight-errant: until, subduing the Persian empire, and piercing Asia from side to side, and having reached even the great rivers of India, he turned back to Babylon to organise his vast empire, to found new cities, pour life into the decrepit frame of the East, and give to these entranced nations the arts and wisdom of Greece. For this he came to Babylon, but came thither only to die. Endless confusion ensued; province after province broke up into a separate kingdom, and the vast empire of Alexander became the prey of military adventurers.

Yet, though this creation of his genius, like so much else that Greece accomplished, was, indeed, in appearance a disastrous failure, still it had not been in vain. The Greek mind was diffused over the East like the rays of the rising sun when it revives and awakens slumbering nature. The Greek language, the most wonderful instrument of thought ever composed by

man, became common to the whole civilised world ; it bound together all educated men from the Danube to the Indus. The Greek literature, poetry, history, science, philosophy, and art were at once the common property of the empire. The brilliance, the audacity, the strength of the Greek reasoning awoke the dormant powers of thought. The idea of laws, the idea of states, the idea of citizenship, came like a revelation upon the degenerate slaves of the Eastern tyrannies. Nor was the result less important to the Greek mind itself. Now, at last, the world was open without obstacle. The philosophers poured over the new empire ; they ransacked the records of primeval times, they studied the hoarded lore of the Egyptian and Chaldean priests. Old astronomical observations, old geometric problems, long concealed, were thrown open to them. They travelled over the whole continent of Asia, studying its wonders of the past, collecting its natural curiosities, examining its surface, its climates, its production, its plants, its animals, and its human races, customs, and ideas. Lastly, they gathered up and pondered over the half-remembered traditions and the half-comprehended mysteries of Asian belief : the conceptions which had risen up before the intense abstraction of Indian and Babylonian mystics, Jewish and Egyptian prophets and priests ; the notion of some great principle or thought, or Being, utterly unseen and unknown, above all gods, and without material form. Thus arose the earliest germ of that spirit which, by uniting Greek logic with Chaldean or Jewish imagination, prepared the way for the religious systems of Mussulman and Christian.

Such was the result of the great conquest of Alexander. Not by its utter failure as an empire are we to judge it ; not by the vices and follies of its founder, nor

the profligate orgies of its dissolution, must we condemn it. We must value it as the means whereby the effete world of the East was renewed by the life of European thought, by which arose the first ideas of nature as a whole and of mankind as a whole, by which the ground was first prepared for the Roman empire, and for Christian and Mahometan religion.

As a nation the Greeks had established little that was lasting. They had changed much; they had organised hardly anything. As the great Asian system had sacrificed all to permanence, so the Greek sacrificed all to movement. The Greeks had created no system of law, no political order, no social system. If civilisation had stopped there, it would have ended in ceaseless agitation, discord, and dissolution. Their character was wanting in self-command and tenacity, and their genius was too often wasted in intellectual licence. Yet if politically they were unstable, intellectually they were great. The lives of their great heroes are their rich legacy to all future ages; Solon, Themistocles, Pericles, Epaminondas, and Demosthenes stand forth as the types of bold and creative leaders of men. The story of their best days has scarcely its equal in history. In art they gave us the works of Phidias, the noblest image of the human form ever created by man. In poetry, the models of all time—Homer, the greatest and the earliest of poets; Æschylus, the greatest master of the tragic art; Plato, the most eloquent of moral teachers; Pindar, the first of all in lyric art. In philosophy and in science the Greek mind laid the foundations of all knowledge, beyond which, until the last three centuries, very partial advance had been made. Building on the ground prepared by the Egyptians, they did much to perfect arithmetic, raised geometry

to a science by itself, and invented that system of astronomy which served the world for fifteen centuries. In knowledge of animal life and the art of healing they constructed a body of accurate observations and sound analysis; in physics, or the knowledge of the material earth, they advanced to the point at which little was added till the time of Bacon himself.

In abstract thought their results were still more surprising. All the ideas that lie at the root of our modern abstract philosophy may be found in germ in Greece. The schools of modern metaphysics are the development of conceptions vaguely grasped by them. They analysed with perfect precision and wonderful minuteness the processes employed in language and in reasoning; they systematised grammar and logic, rhetoric and music; they correctly analysed the human mind, the character, the emotions, and founded the science of morality and the art of education; they correctly analysed the elements of society and political life, and initiated the science of politics, or the theory of social union. Lastly, they criticised and laid bare all the existing beliefs of mankind; pierced the imposing falsehood of the old religions; meditated on all the various answers ever given to the problem of human destiny, of the universe and its origin, and slowly worked out the conception of unity through the whole visible and invisible universe, which, in some shape or other, has been the belief of man for twenty centuries. Such were their gifts to the world. It was an intellect active, subtle, and real, marked by the true scientific character of freedom, precision, and consistency. And, as the Greek intellect overtopped the intellect of all races of men, and combined in itself the gifts of all others, so were the great intellects of Greece all overtopped and

concentrated in one great mind—the greatest, doubtless, of all human minds—the matchless Aristotle; as the poet says, ‘The master of those who know,’ who, in all branches of human knowledge, built the foundations of abiding truth.

Let us pause for a moment to reflect what point we have reached in the history of civilisation. Asia had founded the first arts and usages of material life, begun the earliest social institutions, and taught us the rudiments of science and of thought. Greece had expanded all these in infinite variety and subtlety, had instituted the free state, and given life to poetry and art, had formed fixed habits of accurate reasoning and of systematic observation. Materially and intellectually civilisation existed. Yet in Greece we feel that, socially, everything is abortive. The Greeks had not grown into an united nation. They split into a multitude of jealous republics. These republics split into hostile and restless factions. And when the genius of the Macedonian kings had at last founded an empire, it lasted but twenty years, and gave place to even more colossal confusion. All that we associate with true national existence was yet to come, but the noble race who were to found it had long been advancing towards their high destiny. Alexander, perhaps, had scarcely heard of that distant, half-educated people, who for four centuries had been slowly building up the power which was to absorb and supersede his empire.

Far beyond the limits of his degenerate subjects, worthier successors of his genius were at hand: the Romans were coming upon the world. The Greeks founded the city, the Romans the nation. The Greeks were the authors of philosophy, the Romans of government, justice, and peace. The Greek ideal was thought,

the Roman ideal was law. The Greeks taught us the noble lesson of individual freedom, the Romans the still nobler lesson, the sense of social duty. It is just, therefore, that to the Romans, as to the people who alone throughout all ages gave unity, peace, and order to the civilised world, who gave us the elements of our modern political life, and have left us the richest record of public duty, heroism, and self-sacrifice—it is just that to them we assign the place of the noblest nation in ancient history. That which marks the Roman with his true greatness was his devotion to the social body, his sense of self-surrender to country: a duty to which the claims of family and person were implicitly to yield; which neither death, nor agony, nor disgrace could subdue; which was the only reward, pleasure, or religion which a true citizen could need. This was the greatness, not of a few leading characters, but of an entire people during many generations. The Roman state did not give merely examples of heroes—it was formed of heroes; nor were they less marked by their sense of obedience, submission to rightful authority where the interest of the state required it, submission to order and law.

Nor were the Romans without a deep sense of justice. They did not war to crush the conquered; once subdued, they dealt with them as their fellows, they made equal laws and a common rule for them; they bound them all into the same service of their common country. Above all other nations in the world they believed in their mission and destiny. From age to age they paused not in one great object. No prize could beguile them, no delusion distract them. Each Roman felt the divinity of the Eternal City, destined always to march onwards in triumph: in its service every faculty of his

mind was given ; life, wealth, and rest were as nothing to this cause. In this faith they could plan out for the distant future, build up so as to prepare for vast extension, calculate far distant schemes, and lay stone by stone the walls of an enduring structure. Hence throughout the great age each Roman was a statesman, for he needed to provide for the future ages of his country ; each Roman was a citizen of the world, for all nations were destined to be his fellow-citizens ; each Roman could command, for he had learnt to obey, and to know that he who commands and he who obeys are but the servants of one higher power—their common fatherland.

Long and stern were the efforts by which this power was built up. Deep as is the mystery which covers the origin of Rome, we can still trace dimly how, about the centre of the Italian peninsula, along the banks of the Tiber, fragments of two tribes were fused by some heroic chieftain into one ; the first more intellectual, supple, and ingenious, the second more stubborn, courageous, and faithful. We see more clearly how this compound people rose through the strength of these qualities of mind and character to be the foremost of the neighbouring tribes ; how they long maintained that religious order of society which the Greeks so early shook off ; how it moulded all the institutions of their life, filled them with reverence for the duties of family, for their parents, their wives, for the memory and the spirit of their dead ancestors, taught them submission to judges and chiefs, devotion to their mother-city, love for her commands, her laws, and her traditions, trained them to live and die for her—indeed, compassed their whole existence with a sense of duty towards their fellows and each other ; how this sense of social duty



grew into the very fibres of their iron natures, kept the state through all dangers rooted in the imperishable trust and instinct of a massive people; then how this well-knit race advanced step by step upon their neighbouring tribes, slowly united them in one, gave them their own laws, made them their own citizens; step by step advanced upon the only civilised nation of the peninsula, the theocratic society of Etruria, took from them the arts of war and peace; how the hordes of Northern barbarians poured over the peninsula like a flood, sweeping all the nations below its waters, and when they emerged, Rome only was left strong and confident; how, after four centuries of constant struggle, held up always by the sense of future greatness, the Romans had at length absorbed one by one the leading nations of Italy, and by one supreme effort, after thirty years of war, had crushed their noblest and strongest rivals, their equals in all but genius and fortune, and stood at last the masters of Italy, from shore to shore.

Soon came the great crisis of their history, the long wars of Rome and Carthage. On one side was the genius of war, empire, law, and art, on the other the genius of commerce, industry, and wealth. The subjects of Carthage were scattered over the Mediterranean, the power of Rome was compact. Carthage fought with regular mercenaries, Rome with her disciplined citizens. Carthage had consummate generals, but Rome had matchless soldiers. Long the scale trembled. Not once nor twice was Rome stricken down to the dust. Punic fleets swept the seas. African horsemen scoured the plains. Barbarian hordes were gathered up by the wealth of Carthage, and marshalled by the genius of her great captain. For her fought the greatest military genius of the ancient world, perhaps of

all time. Hannibal, himself a child of the camp training a veteran army in the wars of Spain, led his victorious troops across Gaul, crossed the Alps, poured down upon Italy, struck down army after army, and at last, by one crowning victory, scattered the last military force of Rome. Beset by an invincible army in the heart of Italy, her strongholds stormed, without generals or armies, without money or allies, without cavalry or ships, it seemed that the last hour of Rome was come. Now, if ever, she needed that faith in her destiny, the solid strength of her slow growth, and the energy of her entire people. They did not fail her. In her worst need her people held firm, her senate never lost heart, armies grew out of the very remnants and slaves within her walls. Inch by inch the invader was driven back, watched and besieged in turn. The genius of Rome revived in Scipio. He it was who, with an eagle's sight, saw the weakness of her enemy, swooped, with an eagle's flight, upon Carthage herself, and at last, before her walls, overthrew Hannibal, and with him the hopes and power of his country and his race.

It is in these first centuries that we see the source of the greatness of Rome. Then was founded her true strength. What tales of heroism, dignity, and endurance have they not left us! There are no types of public virtue grander than these. Brutus condemning his traitor sons to death; Horatius defending the bridge against an army; Cincinnatus taken from the plough to rule the state, returning from ruling the state again to the plough; the Decii, father and son, solemnly devoting themselves to death to propitiate the gods of Rome; Regulus the prisoner going to his home only to exhort his people not to yield, and returning calmly to his prison; Cornelia offering up her children to death

and shame for the cause of the people; great generals content to live like simple yeomen; old and young ever ready to march to certain death; hearts proof against eloquence, gold, or pleasure; noble matrons training their children to duty; senates ever confident in their country; generals returning from conquered nations in poverty; the leader of triumphant armies becoming the equal of the humblest citizens.

Carthage once overcome, the conquest of the world followed rapidly. Spain and the islands of the Mediterranean Sea were the prizes of the war. Lower Gaul, Greece, and Macedon were also within fifty years incorporated in Rome. She pushed further. The whole empire of Alexander fell into her hands, and at length, after seven hundred years of conquest, she remained the mistress of the civilised world. But, long before this, she herself had become the prey of convulsions. The marvellous empire, so rapidly expanded, had deeply corrupted the power which had won it. Her old heroes were no more. Her virtues failed her, and her vast dominions had long become the prize of bloody and selfish factions. The ancient republic, whose freemen had once met to consult in the Forum, broke up in the new position for which her system was utterly unfit.

For nearly a century the great empire had inevitably tended towards union in a single centre. One dictator after another had possessed and misused the sovereign power. At last it passed to the worthiest, and the rule over the whole ancient world came to its greatest name, the noble Julius Caesar. In him were found more than the Roman genius for government and law, with a gentleness and grace few Romans ever had; an intellect truly Greek in its love of science, of art, in reach and

subtlety of thought ; and, above all this, in spite of vices and passions which he shared with his age, a breadth of view and heart, a spirit of human fellowship and social progress, peculiar to one who was the friend of men of different races, countries, and ideas. Julius was consummate general, orator, poet, historian, ruler, lawgiver, reformer, and philosopher ; in the highest sense the statesman, magnanimous, provident, laborious, large-hearted, affable, resolute, and brave. With him the Roman empire enters on a new and better phase. He first saw and showed how this vast aggregate of men must be ruled no longer as the subjects of one conquering city, but as a real and single state governed in the interest of all, with equal rights and common laws ; and Rome be no longer the mistress, but the leader only of the nations. In this spirit he broke with the old Roman temper of narrow nationality and pride ; raised to power and trust new men of all ranks and of all nations ; opened the old Roman privileges of citizenship to the new subjects ; laboured to complete and extend the Roman law ; reorganised the administration of the distant provinces ; and sought to extinguish the trace of party fury and hatred.

When the selfish rage of the old Roman aristocracy had struck him down before his work was half complete, yet his work did not perish with him. The Roman empire at last rose to the level which he had planned for it. For some two centuries it did succeed in maintaining an era of progress, peace, and civilisation—a government, indeed, at times frightfully corrupt, at times convulsed to its foundations, yet in the main in accordance with the necessities of the times, and rising in its highest types to wise, tranquil, and prudent rule, embracing all, open to all, just to all, and beloved by

all. Then it was, during those two centuries, broken as they were by temporary convulsions, that the nations of Europe rose into civilised life. Then the Spaniard, the Gaul, the Briton, the German, the people that dwelt along the whole course of the Rhine and the Danube, first learnt the arts and ideas of life; law, government, society, education, industry, appeared amongst them; and over the tracts of land trodden for so many centuries by rival tribes and devastating hordes, security first appeared, turmoil gave place to repose, and there rose the notion, not forgotten for ten centuries, of the solemn Peace of Rome.

Let us recount what it was that the Roman had given to the world. In the first place, his law—that Roman law, the most perfect political creation of the human mind, which for one thousand years grew with one even and expanding life—the law which is the basis of all the law of Europe, including even our own. Then the political system of towns. The actual municipal constitution of the old cities of Western Europe, from Gibraltar to the Baltic, from the Channel to Sicily, is but a development of the Roman city, which lasted through the Middle Ages, and began modern industrial life. Next, all the institutions of administration and police, which modern Europe has developed had their origin there. To them in the Middle Ages men turned when the age of confusion was ending. To them again men turned when the Middle Ages themselves were passing away. The establishment of elective assemblies, of graduated magistracies, of local and provincial justice, of public officers and public institutions, free museums, baths, theatres, libraries, and schools—all that we understand by organised society, in a word, may be traced back to the Empire. Throughout all Western Europe,

from that germ, civilisation arose and raised its head after the invasion of the Northern tribes. From the same source, too, arose the force, at once monarchic and municipal, which overthrew the feudal system. It was the remnant of the old Roman ideas of provincial organisation that first formed the counties and duchies which afterwards coalesced into a state. It was the memory of the Roman township which gave birth to the first free towns of Europe. It was the tradition of a Roman emperor which, by long intermediate steps, transformed the Teutonic chieftain into the modern king or emperor. London, York, Lincoln, Winchester, Gloucester, and Chester were Roman cities, and formed then, as they did for the earlier periods of our history, the pivots of our national administration. Paris, Rouen, Lyons, Marseilles, Bordeaux, in France; Constance, Basle, Coblenz, Cologne, upon the Rhine; Cadiz, Barcelona, Seville, Toledo, Lisbon, in the Iberian—Genoa, Milan, Verona, Rome, and Naples in the Italian peninsula, were in Roman, as in modern times, the great national centres of their respective countries. But, above all else, Rome founded a permanent system of free obedience to the laws on the one hand, and a temperate administration of them on the other; the constant sense of each citizen having his place in a complex whole.

The Roman's strength was in action, not in thought; but in thought he gave us something besides his special creation of universal law. It was his to discover the meaning of history. Egypt had carved on eternal rocks the pompous chronicles of kings. The Greeks wrote profound and brilliant memoirs. It was reserved to a Roman to conceive and execute the history of his people stretching over seven hundred years, and to give the

first proof of the continuity and unity of national life. In art the Roman did little but develop the Greek types of architecture into stupendous and complex forms, fit for new uses, and worthy of his people's grandeur. But the great triumphs of his skill were in engineering. He invented the arch, the dome, and the viaduct. The bridges of the Middle Ages were studied from Roman remains. The great domes of Italian cathedrals, of which that of our own St. Paul's is an imitation, were formed directly on the model of a temple at Rome. But in thought, the great gift of Rome was in her language, which has served as an admirable instrument of religious, moral, and political reflection, and, with many dialectic variations, forms the base of the languages of three of the great nations of Europe. Then it was, under the Roman empire, that the stores of Greek thought became common to the world. As the empire of Alexander had shed them over the East, the empire of Rome gave them to the West. Greek language, literature, poetry, science, and art became the common education of the civilised world; and from the Grampians to the Euphrates, from the Atlas to the Rhine and the Caucasus, for the first and only time in the history of man, Europe, Asia, and Africa formed one political whole. The union of the oriental half, indeed, was mainly external and material, but throughout the western half a common order of ideas prevailed. Their religion was the belief in many gods—a system in which each of the powers of nature, each virtue, each art, was thought to be the manifestation of some separate god. It was a system which stimulated activity, self-reliance, toleration, sociability, and art, but which left the external world a vague and unmeaning mystery, and the heart of man a prey to violent and conflicting passions. It

possessed not that idea of unity which alone can sustain philosophy and science, and alone can establish in the breast a fixed and elevated moral conscience.

The Roman system had its strong points, but it had many weak. They were in the main three. It was a system founded upon war, upon slavery, upon fictions and dreams. As to war, it is most true that war was not then, as in modern times, the monstrous negation of civilisation. It seems that by war alone could nations then be pressed into that union which was essential to all future progress. Whilst war was common to all the nations of antiquity, with the Romans alone it became the instrument of progress. The Romans warred only to found peace. They did not so much conquer as incorporate the nations. Not more by the strength of the Roman than by the instinctive submission in the conquered to his manifest superiority, was the great empire built up. Victors and vanquished share in the honour of the common result--law, order, peace, and government. When the Romans conquered, it was once for all. That which once became a province of the Roman empire rested thenceforth in profound tranquillity. No standing armies, no brutal soldiery, overawed the interior or the towns. Whilst all within the circle of the empire rested in peace, along its frontiers stood the disciplined veterans of Rome watching the roving hordes of barbarians, protecting the pale of civilisation.

Still, however useful in its place, it was a system of war; a system necessarily fatal in the long run to all progress, to all industry, to all the domestic virtues, to all the gentler feelings. In a state in which all great ideas and traditions originated in conquest, the dignity of labour, the arts of industry, were never recognised or respected; the era of conquest over, the existence of the



great Roman became in too many cases purposeless, idle, and vicious. Charity, compassion, humanity, were unknown virtues. The home was sacrificed. The condition of woman in the wreck of the family relations sank to the lowest ebb. In a word, the stern virtues of the old Roman private life seemed ending in inhuman ferocity and monstrous debauchery.

Secondly, the Roman, like every ancient system, was a system of slavery. It existed only for the few. True industry was impossible. The whole industrial class were degraded. The owners of wealth and its producers were alike demoralised. In the great towns were gathered a miserable crowd of poor freemen, with all the vices of the 'mean whites.' Throughout Italy the land was cultivated, not by a peasantry, not by scattered labourers, but by gangs of slaves, guarded in workhouses and watched by overseers. Hence usually the free population and all civilisation was gathered in the towns. The spaces between and around them were wildernesses, with pasturage and slaves in place of agriculture and men.

Thirdly, it was a system based on a belief in a multitude of gods, a system without truth, or coherence, or power. There was no single belief to unite all classes in one faith. Nothing ennobling to trust in, no standard of right and wrong which could act on the moral nature. There were no recognised teachers. The moral and the material were hopelessly confused. The politicians had no system of morality, religion, or belief, and were void of moral authority, though they claimed to have a moral right. The philosophers and the moralists were hardly members of the state; each taught only to a circle of admirers, and exercised no wide social influence. The religion of the people had long ceased to be believed.

It had long been without any moral purpose; it became a vague mass of meaningless traditions.

With these threefold sources of corruption—war, slavery, false belief—the Roman empire, so magnificent without, was a rotten fabric within. Politically vigorous, morally it was diseased. Never perhaps has the world witnessed cases of such stupendous moral corruption, as when immense power, boundless riches, and native energy were left as they were then without object, control, or shame. Then, from time to time, there broke forth a very orgy of wanton strength. But its hour was come. The best spirits were all filled with a sense of the hollowness and corruption around them. Statesmen, poets, and philosophers in all these last eras were pouring forth their complaints and fears, or feebly attempting remedies. The new element had long been making its way unseen, had long been preparing the ground, and throughout the civilised world there was rising up a groan of weariness and despair.

For three centuries a belief in the existence of one God alone, in whom were concentrated all power and goodness, who cared for the moral guidance of mankind, a belief in the immortality of the soul and its existence in another state, had been growing up in the minds of the best Greek thinkers. The noble morality of their philosophers had taken strong hold of the higher consciences of Rome, and had diffused amongst the better spirits throughout the empire new and purer types. Next the great empire itself, forcing all nations in one state, had long inspired in its worthiest members a sense of the great brotherhood of mankind, had slowly mitigated the worst evils of slavery, and paved the way for a religious society. Thirdly, another and a greater cause was at work. Through Greek teachers the world

had long been growing familiar with the religious ideas of Asia, its conceptions of a superhuman world, of a world of spirit, angel, demon, future state, and overruling Creator, with its mystical imagery, its spiritual poetry, its intense zeal and fervent emotion. And now, partly from the contact with Greek thought and Roman civilisation, a great change was taking place in the very heart of that small Jewish race, of all the races of Asia known to us the most intense, imaginative, and pure: possessing a high sense of personal morality, the keenest yearnings of the heart, and the deepest capacity for spiritual fervour. In their midst arose a fellowship of devoted brethren, gathered around one noble and touching character, which adoration has veiled in mystery till he passes from the pale of definite history. On them had dawned the vision of a new era of their national faith, which should expand the devotion of David, the spiritual zeal of Isaiah, and the moral power of Samuel into a gentler, wider, and more loving spirit.

How this new idea grew to the height of a new religion, and was shed over the whole earth by the strength of its intensity and its purity, is to us a familiar tale. We know how the first fellowship of the brethren met; how they went forth with words of mercy, love, justice, and hope; we know their self-denial, humility, and zeal; their heroic lives and awful deaths; their loving natures and their noble purposes; how they gathered around them wherever they came the purest and greatest; how across mountains, seas, and continents the communion of saints joined in affectionate trust; how from the deepest corruption of the heart arose a yearning for a truer life; how the new faith, ennobling the instincts of human nature, raised up the slave, the poor, and the humble to the dignity of common manhood, and gave new meaning to the true

nature of womanhood ; how, by slow degrees, the church, with its rule of right, of morality, and of communion, arose ; how the first founders and apostles of this faith lived and died, and all their gifts were concentrated in one, of all the characters of certain history doubtless the loftiest and purest—the unselfish, the great-hearted Paul.

Deeply as this story must always interest us, let us not forget that the result was due not to one man or to one people—that each race gave its share to the whole : Greece, her intellect and grace ; Rome, her social instinct, her genius for discipline ; Judæa her intensity of belief and personal morality ; Egypt and the African coast their combination of Hellenic, Judaic, and Roman traditions. The task that lay before the new religion was immense. It was, upon a uniform faith, to found a system of sound and common morality ; to reform the deep-rooted evils of slavery ; to institute a method which should educate, teach, and guide, and bring out the tenderer, purer, and higher instincts of our nature. The powers of mind and of character had been trained, first by Greece and then by Rome. To the Christian church came the loftier mission of ruling the affections and the heart.

From henceforth the history of the world shows a new character.

Now and henceforward we see two elements in civilisation working side by side—the practical and the moral. There is now a system to rule the state and a system to act upon the mind ; a body of men to educate, to guide and elevate the spirit and the character of the individual, as well as a set of rules to enforce the laws and direct the action of the nation. There is henceforward the state and the church. Hitherto all

had been confused ; statesmen were priests and teachers ; public officers pretended to order men's lives by law, and pretended in vain. Henceforward for the true sequence of history we must fix our view on Europe, on Western Europe alone : we leave aside the East. The half-Romanised, the half-Christianised East will pass to the empire of Mohammed, to the Arab, the Mongol, and the Turk. For the true evolution of civilised life we must regard the heirs of time, the West, in which is centred the progress and the future of the race. Henceforward, then, for the ten centuries of the Middle Ages which succeeded in Western Europe the fall of the Roman empire, we have two movements to watch together—Feudalism and Catholicism—the system of the state and the system of the church : let us turn now to the former.

The vast empire of Rome broke up with prolonged convulsions. Its concentration in any single hand, however necessary as a transition, became too vast as a permanent system. It wanted a rural population ; it was wholly without local life. Long the awestruck barbarians stood pausing to attack. At length they broke in. Ever bolder and more numerous tribes poured onwards. In wave after wave they swept over the whole empire, sacking cities, laying waste the strongholds, at length storming Rome itself ; and laws, learning, industry, art, civilisation itself, seem swallowed up in the deluge. For a moment it appeared that all that was Roman had vanished. It was submerged, but not destroyed. Slowly the waters of this overwhelming invasion abate. Slowly the old Roman towns and their institutions begin to appear above the waste like the highest points of a flooded country. Slowly the old landmarks reappear and the forms of civilised existence. Four centuries were passed in one continual ebb and flow ; but at length

the restless movement subsided. One by one the conquering tribes settled, took root, and occupied the soil. Step by step they learned the arts of old Rome. At length they were transformed from the invaders into the defenders. King after king strove to give form to the heaving mass, and put an end to this long era of confusion. One, at length, the greatest of them all, succeeded, and reared the framework of modern Europe.

It was the imperial Charlemagne, the greatest name of the Middle Ages, who, like some Roman emperor restored to life, marshalled the various tribes which had settled in France, Germany, Italy, and the north of Spain, into a single empire, beat back, in a long life of war, the tide of invaders on the west, the north, and south, Saxon, Northman, and Saracen, and awakened anew in the memory of nations the type of civil government and organised society. His work in itself was but a single and a temporary effort; but in its distant consequences it has left great permanent effects. It was like a desperate rally in the midst of confusion; but it gave mankind time to recover much that they had lost. In his empire may be traced the nucleus of the state system of Western Europe; by the traditions of his name, the modern monarchies were raised into power. He too gave shape and vigour to the first efforts of public administration. But a still greater result was the indirect effect of his life and labours. It was by the spirit of his established rule that the feudal system which had been spontaneously growing up from beneath the debris of the Roman empire, first found strength to develop into a methodical form, received an imperial sanction to its scheme, and the type of its graduated order of rule.

What was this feudal system, and what were its

results? It may be described as a local organisation of reciprocal *duty* and *privilege*. In the first place, it was a system of local defence. The knight was bound to guard his fee, the baron his barony, the count his county, the duke his duchy. Then it was a system of local government. The lord of the manor had his court of justice, the great baron his greater court, and the king his court above all. Then it was a system of local industry; the freeholder tilled his own fields, the knight was responsible for the welfare of his own lands. The lord had an interest in the prosperity of his lordship. Hence slowly arose an agricultural industry, impossible in any other way. The knight cleared the country of robbers, or beat back invaders, whilst the husbandman ploughed beneath his castle walls. The nation no longer, as under Greece and Rome, was made up of scattered towns. It had a local root, a rural population, and complete system of agricultural life. The monstrous centralisation of Rome was gone, and a local government began.

But the feudal system was not merely material, it was also moral; not simply political, it was social also—nay, also religious. The whole of society was bound into a hierarchy or long series of gradations. Each man had his due place and rank, his rights, and his duties. The knight owed protection to his men; his men owed their services to him. Under the Roman system, there had been only citizens and slaves. Now there was none so high but had grave duties to all below; none so low, not the meanest serf, but had a claim for protection. Hence, all became, from king to serf, recognised members of one common society. Thence sprang the closest bond which has ever bound man to man. To the noble natures of the northern invaders was due the new idea

of personal loyalty, the spirit of truth, faithfulness, devotion, and trust, the lofty sense of honour which bound the warrior to his captain, the vassal to his lord, the squire to his knight. It ripened into the finest temper which has ever ennobled the man of action, the essence of chivalry ; in its true sense not dead, not destined to die—the temper of mercy, courtesy, and truth, of fearlessness and trust, of a generous use of power and strength, of succour to the weak, comfort to the poor, reverence for age, for goodness, and for woman ; which revolts against injustice, oppression, and untruth, and never listens to a call unmoved. It is not possible that this spirit is dead. It watched the cradle of modern society, and is the source of our poetry and art ; it must live for future service, transformed from a military to a peaceful society. It may yet revive the seeds of trust and duty between man and man, inspire the labourer with dignity and generosity, raise the landlord to a consciousness of duty, and renew the mysterious bond which unites all those who labour in a common work.

We turn to the Church, the moral element which pervades the Middle Ages. Amidst the crash of the falling empire, as darker grew the storm which swept over the visible State on earth, more and more the better spirits turned their eyes towards a Kingdom above the earth. They turned, as the great Latin father relates, amidst utter corruption to an entire reconstruction of morality ; in the wreck of all earthly greatness, they set their hearts upon a future life, and strove amidst anarchy and bloodshed to found a moral union of society. Hence rose the Catholic Church, offering to the thoughtful a mysterious and inspiring faith ; to the despairing and the remorseful a new and higher life ; to the wretched, comfort, fellowship, and



aid ; to the perplexed a majestic system of belief and practice—in its creed Greek, in its worship Asiatic, in its constitution Roman. In it we see the Roman genius for organisation and law, transformed and revived. In the fall of her material greatness Rome's social greatness survived. Rome still remained the centre of the civilised world. Latin was still the language which bound men of distant lands together. From Rome went forth the edicts which were common to all Europe. The majesty of Rome was still the centre of civilisation. The bishop's court took the place of that of the imperial governor. The peace of the church took the place of the peace of Rome ; and from the first, the barbarian invaders who overthrew the hollow greatness of the empire humbled themselves reverently before the ministers of religion.

The church stood between the conqueror and the conquered, and joined them both in one. She told to all—Roman and barbarian, slave or freeman, great or weak—how there was one God, one Saviour of all, one equal soul in all, one common judgment, one common life hereafter. She told them how all, as children of one Father, were in His eyes equally dear ; how charity, mercy, humility, devotion alone would make them worthy of His love ; and at these words there rose up in the fine spirits of the new races a sense of brotherhood amongst mankind, a desire for a higher life, a zeal for all the gentler qualities and the higher duties, such as the world had not seen before. Thus was her first task accomplished, and she founded a system of morality common to all and possible to all. She spoke to the slave of his immortal soul, to the master of the guilt of slavery. Master and slave should meet alike within her walls, and lie side by side within her

catacombs; and thus her second task was accomplished, and she overthrew for ever the system of slavery, and raised up the labourer into the dignity of a citizen. Then she told how their common Master, of power unbounded, had loved the humble and the weak. She told of the simple lives of saints and martyrs, their tender care of the poorer brethren, their spirit of benevolence, self-sacrifice, and self-abasement; and thus the third great task was accomplished, when she placed the essence of practical religion in care for the weak, in affection for the family, in reverence for woman, in benevolence to all, and in personal self-denial.

Next, she undertook to educate all alike. She provided a body of common teachers; she organised schools; she raised splendid cathedrals, where all might be brought into the presence of the beautiful, and see all forms of art in their highest perfection—architecture, and sculpture, and painting, and work in glass, in iron, and in wood, heightened by inspiring ritual and touching music. She accepted all without thought of birth or place. She gathered to herself all the knowledge of the time, though all was subordinate to religious life. The priests, so far as such were then possible, were poets, historians, dramatists, musicians, architects, sculptors, painters, judges, lawyers, magistrates, ministers, students of science, engineers, philosophers, astronomers, and moralists. Lastly, she had another task, and she accomplished even that. It was to stand between the tyrant and his victim; to succour the oppressed, to humble the evil ruler, to moderate the horrors of war; above all, to join nation to nation, to mediate between hostile races, to give to civilised Europe some element of union and cohesion.

Let us think of this church—this humanising power of the Middle Ages—as it was in its glory, not in its decay. Let us remember it as a system of life which for ten centuries possessed the passionate devotion of the foremost spirits of their time ; one which has left us a rich store of thought and teaching, of wise precept, lofty poetry, and matchless devotion : as a system which really penetrated and acted on the lives of men. Let us think of it as it was in essence—in its virtues, not in its vices—truly the union of all the men of intellect and character of their age towards one common end : not like Egyptian priests, pretending to govern by law ; not like Greek philosophers, expounding to a chosen sect ; not like modern *savants*, thinking for mere love of thought, or mere love of fame, without method or concert, without moral guidance, without social purpose ; but a system in which the wisest and the best men of their day, themselves reared in a common teaching, organised on a vast scale, and directed by one general rule, devoted the whole energies of their brains and hearts in unison together, to the moral guidance of society ; sought to know only that they might teach, to teach only to improve, and lived only to instruct, to raise, to humanise their fellow-men. Let us think of it thus as it was at its best ; and in this forget even the cruelty, the imposture, and the degradation of its fall ; let horror for its vices and pain for its errors be lost in one sentiment of admiration, gratitude, and honour, for this the best and the last of all the organised systems of human society ; of all the institutions of mankind, the most worthy of remembrance and regret.

But if we are generous in our judgment, let us be just. The Catholic system ended, it is most true, in disastrous

and shameful ruin. Excellent in intention and in method, it was from the first doomed to inevitable corruption from the inherent faults of its constitution; and its intellectual basis was so distorted and precarious, that it was stained with vices and crimes from the very first generation. It had trained and elevated the noblest side of human nature—the religious, the moral, and the social instincts of our being; and the energy with which it met this, the prime want of men, upheld it through the long era of its corruption, and still upholds it in its last pitiable spasm. But with the intellectual and with the practical sphere of man's life it was by its nature incompetent to deal. In its zeal for man's moral progress it had taken its stand upon a false and even a preposterous belief. Burning to subdue the lower passions of man's nature, it had vainly hoped to crush the practical instincts of his activity. It discarded with disdain the thoughts and labours of the ancient world. It proclaimed as the ideal of human life a visionary and even a selfish asceticism. For a period, for a long period, its transcendent and indispensable services maintained it in spite of every defect and vice; but at last the time came when the outraged instincts reasserted their own, and showed how hopeless is any religion or system of life not based on a conception of human nature as a whole, at once complete and true.

The church began in indifference towards science and contempt for material improvement. Indifference and contempt passed at length into hatred and horror; and it ended in denouncing science, and in a bitter conflict with industry. At last it had become, in spite of its better self, the enemy of all progress, all thought, all industry, all freedom. It allied itself with all that

was retrograde and arbitrary. It fell from bad to worse, and settled into an existence of timid repression. Hence it came that the church, attempting to teach upon a basis of falsehood, to direct man's active life upon a merely visionary creed, to govern a society which it only half understood, succeeded only for a time. It was scarcely founded before it began to break up. It had scarcely put forth its strength before it began to decay. It stood like one of its own vast cathedrals, building for ages yet never completed; falling to ruin whilst yet unfinished; filling us with a sense of beauty and of failure; a monument of noble design and misdirected strength. It fell like the Roman empire, with prolonged convulsion and corruption, and left us a memory of cruelty, ignorance, tyranny, rapacity, and vice, which we too often forget were but the symptoms and consequences of its fall.

We have stood beside the rise and fall of four great stages of the history of mankind. The priestly systems of Asia, the intellectual activity of Greece, the military empire of Rome, the moral government of Catholicism, had each been tried in turn, and each had been found wanting. Each had disdained the virtues of the others; each had failed to incorporate the others. With the fall of the Catholic and feudal system, we enter upon the age of modern society. It is an age of dissolution, reconstruction, variety, movement, and confusion. It is an era in which all the former elements reassert themselves with new life, all that had ever been attempted is renewed again; an era of amazing complexity, industry, and force, in which every belief, opinion, and idea is criticised, transformed, and expanded. Every institution of society and habit of life is thoroughly unsettled and remodelled; all the sciences are constructed—art,

industry, policy, religion, philosophy, and morality are developed with a vigorous and constant growth; but, withal, it is an era in which all is individual, separate, and free: without system, or unity, or harmony, such as had marked the four preceding epochs.

First, the feudal system broke up under the influence of the very industry which it had itself fostered and reared. The great fiefs, as they became settled, gradually gathered into masses; one by one they fell into the hands of kings, and at length upon the ruins of feudalism arose the great monarchies. The feudal atoms crystallised into the actual nations of Europe. The variety and dispersion of the feudal system vanished. A central monarchy established one uniform order, police, and justice; and modern political society, as we know it, rose. The invention of gunpowder had now made the knight helpless, the bullet pierced his mail, and standing armies took the place of the feudal militia. The discovery of the compass had opened the ocean to commerce. The free towns expanded with a new industry, and covered the continent with infinitely varied products. The knight became the landlord, the man-at-arms became the tenant, the serf became the free labourer, and the emancipation of the worker, the first, the greatest victory of the church, was complete.

Thus, at last, the energies of men ceased to be occupied by war, to which a small section of the society was now permanently devoted. Peace became in fact the natural, not the accidental, state of man. Society passed into its final phase of industrial existence. Peace, industry, and wealth again gave scope to thought. The riches of the earth were ransacked, new continents were opened, intercourse increased over the whole earth. Greeks, flying from Constantinople before the Turks, spread over

Europe, bringing with them books, instruments, inscriptions, gems, and sculptures—the science, the literature, and the inventions of the ancient world, long stored up on the shores of the Bosphorus. Columbus discovered America. The Portuguese sailed round Africa to India, a host of daring adventurers penetrated untraversed seas and lands. Man entered at last upon the full dominion of the earth. Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo unveiled the mystery of the world, and made a revolution in all thought. Mathematics, chemistry, botany, and medicine, preserved mainly by the Arabs during the Middle Ages, were again taken up almost from the point where the Greeks had left them. The elements of the material earth were eagerly explored. The system of experiment (which Bacon reduced to a method) was worked out by the common labour of philosophers and artists. For the first time the human form was dissected and explored. Physiology, as a science, began. Human history and society became the subject of regular and enlightened thought. Politics became a branch of philosophy. With all this the new knowledge was scattered by the printing-press, itself the product and the stimulus of the movement; in a word, the religious ban was raised from off the human powers. The ancient world was linked on to the modern. Science, speculation, and invention lived again after twelve centuries of trance. A fresh era of progress opened with the new-found treasures of the past.

Next, before this transformation of ideas the church collapsed. Its hollow dogmas were exposed, its narrow prejudices ridiculed, its corruptions probed. Men's consciences and brains rose up against an institution which pretended to teach without knowledge, and to govern though utterly disorganised. Convulsion followed on

convulsion; the struggle we call the Reformation opened, and led to a series of religious wars, which for a century and a half shook Europe to its foundations. At the close of this long era of massacre and war, it was found that the result achieved was small indeed. Europe had been split into two religious systems, of which neither one nor the other could justify its enormous pretensions. Admiration for the noble characters of the first Reformers, for their intensity, truth, and zeal, their heroic lives and deaths, the affecting beauty of their purposes and hopes, is yet possible to us, whilst we confess that the Protestant, like the Catholic faith, had failed to organise human industry, society, and thought; that both had failed to satisfy the wants and hopes of man. More and more have thought and knowledge grown into even fiercer conflict with authority of Book or Pope; more and more in Catholic France, as in Protestant England, does the moral guidance of men pass from the hands of priests, or sect, to be assumed, if it be assumed at all, by the poet, the philosopher, the essayist, and even the journalist; more and more do church and sect stand dumb and helpless in presence of the evils with which society is rife.

Side by side the religious and the political system tottered in ruin together. From the close of the fifteenth century, now one, now the other was furiously assailed. For the most part, both were struck at once. The long religious wars of Germany and France; the defence by the heroic William the Silent of the free Republic of Holland against the might of Spain; the glorious repulse of its Armada by England; the immortal revolution achieved by our greatest statesman, Cromwell; the battle of his worthy successor, William of Orange, against the oppression of Louis XIV., were all but parts



of one long struggle, which lasted during the whole of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—a struggle in which religion and politics both equally shared, a struggle between the old powers of Feudalism and Catholicism on the one side, with all the strength of ancient systems, against the half-formed, ill-governed force of freedom, industry, and thought; a long and varied struggle in which aristocracy, monarchy, privileged caste, arbitrary and military power, church formalism, dogmatism, superstition, narrow teaching, visionary worship, and hollow creeds, were each in turn attacked, and each in turn prostrated.

A general armistice followed this long and exhausting struggle. The principles of Protestantism, Constitutionalism, Toleration, and the balance of power, established a system of compromise, and for a century restored some order in the political and religious world. But in the world of ideas the contest grew still keener. Industry expanded to incredible proportions, and the social system was transformed before it. Thought soared into unimagined regions, and reared a new realm of science, discovery, and art. Wild social and religious visions arose and passed through the spirit of mankind. At last the forms and ideas of human life, material, social, intellectual, and moral, had all been utterly transformed, and the fabric of European society rested in peril on the crumbling crust of the past.

The great convulsion came. The gathering storm of centuries burst at length in the French Revolution. Then, indeed, it seemed that chaos was come again. It was an earthquake blotting out all trace of what had been, engulfing the most ancient structures, destroying all former landmarks, and scattering society in confusion and dismay. It spreads from Paris through every corner

of France, from France to Italy, to Spain, to Germany, to England ; it pierces, like the flash from a vast storm-cloud, through every obstacle of matter, space, or form. It kindles all ideas of men, and gives wild energy to all purposes of action. For though terrible, it was not deadly. It came not to destroy but to construct, not to kill but to give life. And through the darkest and bloodiest whirl of the chaos there rose up clear on high, before the bewildered eyes of men, a vision of a new and greater era yet to come—of brotherhood, of freedom, and of union, of never-ending progress, of mutual help, trust, co-operation, and goodwill ; an era of true knowledge, of real science, and practical discovery ; but, above all, an era of active industry for all, of the dignity and consecration of labour, of a social life just to all, common to all, and beneficent to all.

That great revolution is not ended. The questions it proposed are not yet solved. We live still in the heavings of its shock. It yet remains with us to show how the last vestiges of the feudal, hereditary, and aristocratic systems may give place to a genuine, an orderly, and permanent republic ; how the trammels of a faith long grown useless and retrograde may be removed without injury to the moral, religious, and social instincts, which are still much entangled in it ; how industry may be organised, and the workman enrolled with full rights of citizenship, a free, a powerful, and a cultivated member of the social body. Such is the task before us. The ground is all prepared, the materials are abundant and sufficient. We have a rich harvest of science, a profusion of material facilities, a vast collection of the products, ideas, and inventions of past ages. Every vein of human life is full ; every faculty has been trained to full efficiency ; every want

of our nature is supplied. We need now only harmony, order, union; we need only to group into a whole these powers and gifts: the task before us is to discover some complete and balanced system of life; some common basis of belief; some object for the imperishable religious instincts and aspirations of mankind; some faith to bind the existence of man to the visible universe around him; some common social end for thought, action, and feeling; some common ground for teaching, studying, or judging. We need to extract the essence of all older forms of civilisation, to combine them, and harmonise them in one, a system of existence which may possess something of the calm, the completeness, and the symmetry of the earliest societies of men; the zeal for truth, knowledge, science, and improvement, which marks the Greek, with something of his grace, his life, his radiant poetry and art; the deep social spirit of Rome, its political sagacity, its genius for government, law, and freedom, its noble sense of public life; above all else, the constancy, earnestness, and tenderness of the mediæval faith, with its discipline of devotion to the service of a Power far greater than self, with its zeal for the spiritual union of mankind. We have to combine these with the industry, the knowledge, the variety, the activity, the humanity, of modern life.

## CHAPTER III

### SOME GREAT BOOKS OF HISTORY

Of all subjects of study, it is History which stands most sorely in need of a methodical plan of reading. The choice of books is nowhere a more perplexing task: for the subject is practically infinite; the volumes impossible to number; and the range of fact interminable. There are some three or four thousand years of recorded history, and the annals, it may be, of one hundred different peoples, each forming continuous societies of men during many centuries. Many famous histories in one or two thousand pages cover at most about half a century: and that for the life of one nation alone. Macaulay's fascinating story-book occupied him, we are told, more years of labour to compose than, in some of its periods, the events occupied in fact. A brilliant writer has given us twelve picturesque volumes which almost exactly cover the life of one queen. The standard history of France extends to 10,000 pages. And it is whispered at Oxford that a conscientious annalist of the Civil War completes the history of each year in successive volumes by the continuous study of an equal period. At this rate forty thousand years would hardly suffice to compile the annals of mankind.

In this infinite sea of histories, memoirs, biographies, and annals, how is a busy man to choose? He cannot read the forty thousand volumes—nor four thousand.

nor four hundred. Which are the most needful? which period, which movement, which people, is most deserving of study? When I say study, I am not thinking of students, but of ordinary fireside reading in our mother-tongue for busy men and women: men and women who cannot give their whole lives to libraries, who, 'like the ancient Greeks,' as Disraeli says, know no language but their own, and who are not going in for competitive examinations—if, indeed, these islands still hold man, woman, boy, or girl who has never caught that mental influenza, the examination plague. Learned persons and literary persons (which is not always the same thing) are apt to assume that every one has of course read all the ordinary books; they never speak about 'standard' works, in every gentleman's library, but, alas! not always in every gentleman's head. They give little help to the general reader, assuming that every schoolboy has the dynasties of Egyptian kings at his finger's end, and can repeat the list of the Popes backwards, as Macaulay did. No doubt, as schoolboys and schoolgirls, the week after we had 'floored' that second history paper in the final, we could most of us perform these feats of memory. But many of us have forgotten these dates and names, have got rather mixed about our Egyptian dynasties, and are even somewhat shaky with our Bourbons, Plantagenets, and Hohenstaufens. To those of us in such a case, it is tantalising to be dazzled by the learned with the latest cuneiform inscription, or the last newly excavated barrow, which finally decides the site of some 'scuffle of kites and crows' in the seventh century.

I propose to myself to speak about a few simple old books of general history, which to historians and the learned are matters of A B C; just as Mr. Cook's obliging

guides personally conduct the untravelled to Paris, Venice, and Rome. We are as ambitious and wide-roaming nowadays in our reading as in our touring. The travelled world hardly considers it leaving home, unless it is bound for Central Asia, the Pacific, or Fusiyama. There are, however, still some fine things in the old country which every one has not seen; and my humble task is simply to act as cicerone to those who seek to visit for the first time in their lives the great fields of eternal history, who have but limited time at their disposal, who could not find their way without a guide, and speak no foreign tongue.

Without some organic unity in its conception, history tends to become literary curiosity and display, weakening our mental force rather than strengthening it. History cannot mean the record of all the facts that ever happened and the biographies of all those whose lives are recorded; for these are infinite. There is a type of bookman, most frequently met with in Germany, to whom the reading and the making of books seem to be functions of nature, as it is a function of nature for the cow to eat grass and to give milk; men to whom it is a matter of absolute unconcern what is the subject of the book, the matter, origin, or ultimate use of the book, provided only the book be new. If a vacant gap can be discovered in the jungle of books where a spare hole can be filled, it matters no more to the author what end the book may serve, than it concerns the cow what becomes of its milk. The cow has to secrete fresh milk, and the author has to secrete a new work. And there is a type of historian to whom all human events are equally material. It is not the historian's concern, they think, to pick and choose, or to prefer one fact to another. All facts accurately

recorded are truth : and to set them forth in a very big octavo volume is *history*.

The true object of history is to show us the life of the human race in its fulness, and to follow up the tale of its continuous and difficult evolution. The conception of the progress of civilisation in intelligible sequence, is the greatest achievement of modern thought. History is the biography of civilised man : it can no more be cut into absolute sections than can the biography of a single life. And to devote our sole interest to some small period, country, or race is as rational as it would be to take a few years to stand for the life-story of a great hero. That human history makes one intelligible biography does not imply that we have to load our memories with an interminable roll of facts, dates, and names. This long record may be grouped into a manageable series of dominant phases. To understand the spirit and character of each of these phases is the root of the matter. The events and persons are manifestations of that character, and serve to illustrate and vivify the spirit. History becomes 'the old almanack' which the dull cynic called it, when we treat it from the photographic, the local, the tribal point of view, instead of the human and the organic point of view.

Neither recondite researches nor novel theories are needed to decide what are the leading epochs and dominant phases in general history. The world has long been agreed upon them, with some variations in detail, and modifications in the manner of subsections. For practical purposes they may be grouped into six.

I. *The Early Oriental Theocracies*.—These are the great stationary systems, held together by dominant religious discipline, and the pressure of social custom.

The types of these are the Egyptian, Assyrian, Persian, and Indian theocratic monarchies, and the variations we find in the Chinese, Buddhist, Japanese empires, or to some extent in modern Mahometan kingdoms. These account for vast periods of history, and for far the largest portions of the planet.

It is specially significant that the Fetichist, or spontaneous Nature-worshipping epochs of human life, have no recorded history; although they form far the longest epochs in time, and are far the most extensive in space. History, in the sense of recorded fact, is one of the fine creations of Theocracy and the great sacerdotal state-organisations. The history of the Nature-worshippers has to be gathered from analogy, remnants, and extant tribes. It has neither record, names, dates, nor facts.

## II. *The Rise and Development of the Greek World.*—

This involves the story of the separate republics, of the intellectual activity, personal freedom, and individual self-assertion characteristic of the Hellenic spirit. If a subsection were here inserted, it would be (II.) the rise, development, and dissolution of Alexander's empire.

## III. *The Rise and Conclusion of the Roman World.*

—The origin of the Republic, the formation of the dictatorial system, the ultimate dissolution of the bifurcated Roman empire. Here also, if subsections were inserted, the period of a thousand years falls into two divisions: (a) that of the Republic, down to Julius Cæsar; (b) that of the Empire, down to Justinian.

## IV. *The Catholic and Feudal World:* known as the Middle Ages.—This epoch, though it has the double aspect, Catholic and Feudal, cannot be grouped into



divisions. For Catholicism and Feudalism are contemporary, co-ordinate, and indissolubly associated movements. They imply each other. They are converse phases ; but not successive or distinct epochs.

*V. The Formation and Development of the Great European States.*—This includes the rise and growth of the monarchies of modern times—the Renaissance of Learning, with Humanism, the Reformation, and what we call Modern History proper, down to the last century.

This is one of the most complex of all the epochs : and it may properly be divided into subsections thus :—

V. (a) The rise and consolidation of the State System of modern Europe, with the intellectual and artistic revival that followed it.

V. (b) The rise, issue, and settlement of the anti-Catholic Reformation, and the religious wars that it involved, down to the Peace of Westphalia.

V. (c) The struggle between the monarchical and the republican principles in Italy, Switzerland, Spain, Holland, and England.

V. (d) The great territorial and mercantile wars in Europe, and the struggle for the Balance of Power, down to the close of the Seven Years War.

*VI. The Political and Industrial Revolution of the Modern World.*—This would include the rise and consolidation of Prussia, of the United States ; the intellectual, scientific, and industrial revolution of the last century ; the French Revolution, and the wars that issued out of it ; the development of transmarine

empires and international communication ; Democracy and Socialism in their various types.

These six great phases of human civilisation may be mentally kept apart for purposes of clear thought, and as wide generalisations ; but some of them practically overlap, and blend into each other. And it is only whilst we keep our eyes intent on the world's stage, rather than some local movement, that these phases appear to be distinct. The vast ages of the Eastern and Egyptian Theocracies are separate enough both in time and in spirit. But the Greek and Roman worlds are to some extent contemporary, and at last they melt into one compound whole, when Rome incorporated Greece : its territory, literature, culture, and art. The whole mental apparatus, and finally the manners, of the empire became Greek ; until at last the capital of the Roman world was transferred to a Greek city, and the so-called ' Romans ' spoke Greek and not Latin. Thus we may, for many purposes, treat the Græco-Roman world as one : and in fact combine the second and the third epochs.

What we call the Mediæval phase is very sharply marked off from its predecessor by the spread of Christianity ; and it seems easy enough to distinguish our fourth from our third epoch, both in time and in character. But this holds good only for Europe as a whole ; and it is not so easy, if we take Byzantine history by itself, to determine the point at which the imperial government at Constantinople ceases to be Græco-Roman, and begins to be Mediæval. Nor, indeed, is it quite easy to fix a date or a name, when the Papacy ceased to belong to the ancient world, and came to be the spiritual centre of the mediæval world. Again, the modern world is very definitely marked off from the

## THE MEANING OF HISTORY

mediæval, and we can with precision fix on the second half of the fifteenth century as the date of its definitive settlement. But if we keep our attention solely on the history of the church, of literature, or of thought, the dissolution of the mediæval world is seen to be preparing quite a century earlier than the taking of Constantinople by the Turks.

Our sixth epoch, the age of the Revolution, is only the rapid and violent form of a process which has been going on since the general use of printing, of guns, and the era of ocean trade and accumulated wealth. It had been in operation in all the attacks on the Catholic doctrines and institutions, in the revival of ancient learning and the advance of science, in the consolidation of the European kingdoms; and even long before in the labours of such men as Roger Bacon, Dante, Langland, Wickliffe, Huss, and Bruno. For these reasons the revolutionary agitation of the last century and a half is nothing but the more intense and conscious form of the movement to found a new modern world which began with the decay of Catholicism and Feudalism.

Therefore, if we are desirous of keeping in the highest generalisations of history, and indeed for many practical purposes, the six great epochs of universal history may be reduced to these four:—

1. *The Ancient Monarchies—or the Theocratic age.*
2. *The Græco-Roman world—or the Classical.*
3. *The Catholic and Feudal world—or the Mediæval.*
4. *The Modern—or the Revolutionary world of Free Thought and Free Life.*

These dominant epochs (whether we treat them as six or as grouped into four) should each be kept co-ordinate and clear in our minds, as mutually dependent on each

other, and each as an inseparable part of a living whole. No conception of history would be adequate, or other than starved and stunted, which entirely kept out of sight any one of these indispensable and characteristic epochs. They are all indissoluble; yet utterly different, and radically contrasted, just as the child is to the man, or the man to the woman; and for the same reason—that they are forms of one organic humanity.

It follows, that it is not at all the history of our own country which is all-important, overshadowing all the rest, nor the history of the times nearest to our own. From the spiritual, and indeed the scientific, point of view, if history be the continuous biography of the evolution of the human race, it may well be that the history of remoter times, which have the least resemblance to our own, may often be the more valuable to us, as correcting national prejudices and the narrow ideas bred in us by daily custom, whilst it is the wider outlook of universal history that alone can teach us all the vast possibilities and latent forces in human society, and the incalculable limits of variation which are open to man's civilisation. The history of other races, and of very different systems, may be of all things the best to correct our insular vanities, and our conventional prejudices. We have indeed to know the history of our own country, of the later ages. But the danger is, that we may know little other history.

Thus one who had a grasp on the successive phases of civilisation from the time of Moses until our own day; vividly conceiving the essential features of Egyptian, Assyrian, Chaldean, and Persian society; who felt the inner heart of the classical world, and who was in touch with the soul of the mediæval religion and chivalry—would know more of true history than one who was

simply master of the battles of the seventeenth century, and could catalogue, with dates and names, the annals of each German duchy, and each Italian republic. No doubt, for college examinations, they wring from raw lads, as Milton says, 'like blood from the nose,' the details of the Saxon coinage, and the latest German theory of the mark-system. These things are essential to examinations and prizes, and the good boy will give his whole mind to them. But they are far from essential to an intelligible understanding of the course which has been followed in the marvellous unfolding of our human destiny. To see this, in all the imposing unity of the great drama, it is not enough to be crammed with catalogues of official and military incidents. It is needful to have a living sense of the characteristic types of life which succeeded each other in such glaring contrast, and often with such deadly hatred, through the dominant phases of man's society on earth.

Our present business is to select a small choice of books of history, which are of permanent and daily resource to the general reader of English, and which have that charm and force of insight that no manual or school-book can possess. And we may begin with the fountain-head of primitive story, with the Father of history—Herodotus. Every one who reads seriously at all, every man, woman, and child who has ideas of any book above a yellow-covered novel, should know something of this most simple, fascinating, and instructive of historians. In schools and colleges a thorough mastery of Herodotus has long been the foundation of a historical education. But he deserves to be the familiar friend of every sensible reader.

This is the oldest volume of secular history that has reached us in anything like a complete state: and here

in the earliest books of Herodotus we may watch the first naïve expression of the insatiable curiosity of the Hellenic mind brought face to face with the primeval theocracies of the Oriental world. It is a source of perennial delight to observe how the keen, busy, inquisitive, fearless Greek comes up to the venerable monuments of the East, and probes them with his critical acumen. We may gather rich lessons in philosophy, and not merely lessons in history and the story of man's progress, if we follow up this European, logical, eager, and almost modern observer, as he analyses and recounts the ways of the unchanging Past in Africa or in Asia. We seem to be standing beside the infant lisplings of critical judgment, at the cradle of our social and political institutions, at the first tentative steps of that long development of society which has brought us to the world of to-day. What a prolonged epic of revolution in thought and in politics lay hid in such a phrase of Herodotus as this: 'The priests do say, but I think—', or in the tale of the man of Hecataeus, or the embassy of Aristagoras to the Greeks of the mainland! We trace this Greek inquirer, stepping up to these colossi of an incalculable antiquity, with the free and bold mind of a modern *savant* exploring an Egyptian tomb or some prehistoric barrow, combined it may be with no small measure of the ignorant and contemptuous wonder of the ruder conqueror. In Herodotus we see a bright and varied picture of the whole of the primitive types of civilisation, and the first stirrings of fiery aspiration in the genius of movement as it gazed into the motionless features of the genius of permanence embodied in the Sphinx of the Nile valley.

It was the fashion once to disparage the good faith of Herodotus, and to ridicule his childlike credulity, his

garrulous inconsequence, and his gratuitous guessing on matters both spiritual and physical. But there is now a reaction of opinion. And if Herodotus is not an exact observer nor a scientific reasoner, there is a disposition to admit more of foundation for some of his travellers' tales than was at first supposed. Nay, recent explorations and excavations both in Africa and in Asia have confirmed some of his most suspicious reports; and, at any rate, we may follow those who think that he was doing his best with the sources of information before him. And it is clear that the earliest inquiries of all, in a field so vast and comprehensive, could only be made in a manner thus unsystematic and casual. Where scientific verification is not possible, it is well to have a variety of working hypotheses. Hearsay evidence, indeed, is anything but good evidence. But, where strict evidence is not to be had, it is useful, in great and decisive events, to collect all the hearsay evidence that is forthcoming at all. And this is what Herodotus did. He is no great philosopher in things social or in things physical. But he had that which the whole Eastern world and all the wisdom of the Egyptians could not produce, which the wealth of Persia could not buy, nor the priests of Babylon discover. He had that observant, inquisitive, critical eye that ultimately developed into Greek philosophy and science—the eye that let slip nothing in Nature or in Man—the mind that never rested till it had found some working hypothesis to account for every new and striking phenomenon. It is the first dawn of the modern spirit.

This most delightful of all story-books is abundantly open to the English reader. There are several translations, and for some purposes Herodotus, whose style is one of artless conversation, may be read in English

almost as well as in the Greek. In the elaborate work of Canon Rawlinson we have a good translation, with abundant historical and antiquarian illustrations by the Canon and by Sir Henry Rawlinson, with maps, plans, and many drawings. Herodotus preserves to us the earliest consecutive account that the West has recorded of the ancient empires of the East. And, although his record is both casual and vague, it serves as a basis, round which the researches of recent Orientalists may be conveniently grouped, just as Blackstone and Coke form the text of so many manuals of law, in spite of the fact that both are so largely obsolete. To use Herodotus with profit we need such a systematic *Manual of Ancient History* as that of Heeren. This book, originally published in 1799, and continued and corrected by the author down to the year 1828, although now in many respects rendered obsolete by subsequent discoveries, remains an admirable model of the historical summary. Unfortunately it requires so many corrections and additions that it can hardly be taken as the current text-book, all the more that the English translation itself, published in 1829 at Oxford, is not very easily procured. For all practical purposes, the book is now superseded by Canon Rawlinson's *Manual of Ancient History*, Oxford, 1878, which follows the plan of Heeren, covers nearly the same period, and treats of the same nations. It is, in fact, the *Manual* of Heeren corrected, rewritten, supplemented, and brought up to that date, somewhat overburdened with the masses of detail, wanting in the masterly conciseness of the great Professor of Göttingen, but embodying the learning and discoveries of three later generations.

But Egyptology and Assyriology are unstable quicksands in which every few years the authorities become



obsolete by the discovery of fresh records and relics. Professor Sayce, the principal exponent of the untrustworthiness of Herodotus, assures us that Canon Rawlinson and his coadjutors have now become obsolete themselves, and that the history of the plains of the Nile and the Euphrates must again be rewritten. But the tendency to-day is, perhaps, inclined to treat the discoveries on which Professor Sayce relies as neither so certain nor so important as he was once disposed to think. For the general reader it may be enough to rely on Max Duncker's *History of Antiquity* (6 vols., translated 1878; see vols. i. and ii. for Egypt and Assyria).<sup>1</sup>

There is another mode, besides that of books, whereby much of the general character of Oriental civilisation may be learned. That is, by pictures, illustrations, models, monuments, and the varied collections to be found in our own Museum, in the Louvre at Paris, and other collections of Oriental antiquities. Thousands of holiday-makers saunter through these galleries, and gaze at the figures in a vacant stare. But this is not to learn at all. The monuments and cases, wall-paintings and relics, require patient and careful study with appropriate books. The excellent handbooks of our Museum will make a good beginning, but the monuments of Egypt and Assyria are hardly intelligible without complete illustrated explanation. These are, for Egypt, the dissertations, notes, and woodcuts by various Egyptologists in Canon Rawlinson's English *Herodotus*; in Sir Gardner Wilkinson's great work on the *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians*, 1837; and his *Handbook for Egypt*, 1858.

The facts, dates, persons, and incidents of Egyptian history are still the problems of recondite archæology. The spirit of Egyptian civilisation may be grasped,

without any copious reading, by any one who will seriously study instead of stare at the great Egyptian collections. Much may be learned, though in far less degree, by those who will study the Asiatic antiquities with such works as Layard's *Nineveh*, Fergusson's *History of Architecture*, Canon Rawlinson's *Five Great Monarchies*, and the dissertations in his English *Herodotus*. And much may be learned from Professor Sayce's *Ancient Empires of the East*, and from the recent series of the *Story of the Nations*. These are unequal in execution, and avowedly popular and elementary in design: but they are plain, cheap, accessible to all, and contain the most recent general views. Brugsch's great *History of Egypt*, translated 1879-1881, is rather a book for the special student of history than for the general reader.

It is not every reader who has leisure to master such a book as Rawlinson's English *Herodotus*. But something of this fountain of history all may know. Even in such a pleasant boy's book as Mr. Church's *Stories from the East* and *Stories from Herodotus* we get some flavour of the fine old Greek traveller. There are three great sections of Herodotus which are of special interest: 1. the history of the foundation of Cyrus' kingdom; 2. the books on the history, antiquities, and customs of Egypt; 3. the immortal story of Marathon, Thermopylæ, and Salamis. Literature contains no more enthralling page than the tale by the father of prose how the first great duel between the East and the West ended in the most momentous victory recorded in the annals of mankind. Every educated man should know by heart the wonderful story: how the virtue of Aristides, the daring of Miltiades, the heroism of Leonidas, and the genius of Themistocles saved the infant civilisation of

Western Europe from the fate which overtook the far more cultivated races of Syria and Asia Minor. A distinguished Indian Mussulman, himself of the race of the Prophet, is wont to bewail the defeat of Xerxes as the greatest disaster in history. But for that, he says, the vanguard of civilisation would have advanced on Asiatic, and not on European, lines; on Theocratic instead of Democratic principles. The theology of the learned Syed may be impeached; but his history is sound.

One other Greek book of history all should know, perhaps the greatest of all histories, that of the Athenian Thucydides. Now Thucydides was in pre-eminent degree what Herodotus was not—a strictly scientific historian; one whose conception of the canons of historic precision has never been surpassed, against whom hardly a single error of fact, hardly a single mistaken judgment, has ever been brought home. Thucydides is much more than a great historian; or, rather, he was what every great historian ought to be—he was a profound philosopher. His history of the Peloponnesian War is like a portrait by Titian: the whole mind and character, the inner spirit and ideals, the very tricks and foibles, of the man or the age come before us in living reality. No more memorable, truthful, and profound portrait exists than that wherein Thucydides has painted the Athens of the age of Pericles.

Athens in the age of Pericles, and under the guidance of Pericles, reached one of those supreme moments in the varying course of civilisation which, like the best dramas of Shakespeare or the Madonnas of Raphael, are incomparable creations of the human faculties standing apart for ever. With all its vices, follies, and littleness, nothing like it had ever been seen before, nothing

like it can ever be seen again. It embodied originality, simplicity, beauty, audacity, and grace, with a fulness and harmony which the weary world, the heir of all the ages, can never recall. And in Thucydides it found the philosopher who penetrated to its inmost soul, and the artist who could paint it with living touch. How memorable are those monumental phrases which he puts into the mouth of his favourite hero or claims for his own work! 'My history,' he says, 'is an everlasting possession, not a prize composition which is heard and forgotten.' 'We men of Athens know how to cultivate the mind without losing our manhood, and to create beauty without extravagant costliness.' 'We count the man who cares nothing for the public weal as a worthless nuisance, and not simply an inoffensive nonentity.' 'All citizens take their share of the public burdens: all are free to offer their opinion in the public concerns.' 'We have no cast-iron system: every man with us is free to live his own life.' 'Life is harmonised by our civic festivals and our personal refinement.' 'The whole earth is the funeral monument of those who live a noble life: their epitaph is graven, not on stone, but on the hearts of men.'

Thucydides, alas! is not like Herodotus, easy to read and simple in his thought and language. His only, and very moderate, volume (a single copy of the *Times* newspaper contains as many words) is very close reading: crammed with profound thought, epigrammatic, intricate, obscure, and most peculiar in the turn of conglomerate phrase. But in the masterly translation of Dr. Jowett, and with the paraphrase and illustrations in the corresponding part of Grote's *History of Greece*, he may be read without difficulty by every student reader. All at least should know his resplendent picture of

Pericles, and the Periclean ideal of Athens, an ideal as usual only reached by a few exalted spirits, and by them, but for a moment of glowing inspiration—an ideal of which we have the grotesque obverse in the wild comedies of Aristophanes. All too should know the story of Cleon and of Alcibiades, the terrible scene of the plague at Athens, and the ghastly insurrection at Corcyra, and perhaps the most stirring of all, the overthrow of Athens in the port of Syracuse. I can remember how, when I read that within sight of the heights of Epipolæ and the fountain of Arethusa, it seemed as if the bay around me still rang with the shout of triumph and the wail of the defeated host. It is surely the most dramatic page, yet one of the simplest and most severely impartial and exact, in the whole range of historical literature.

For the remainder of Greek history after the defeat and decline of Athens we have no contemporary authorities of any value, except the *Memoirs* of Xenophon; and for the marvellous career of Alexander, the best is Arrian, who at least had access to the works of eye-witnesses. And thus when we lose the light of Thucydides and Xenophon, we must trust to Plutarch and the later compilers, who had materials that are lost to the modern world. Between Thucydides and Xenophon the analogy is strange, and the contrast even more strange. Both were Athenians, saturated with Attic culture, both exiles, both unsparing critics of the democracy of their native republic, but the first stood resolute in his proud philosophic neutrality, whilst cherishing the ideal of the country he had lost; the other became a renegade in the Greek fashion, the citizen of his country's natural enemy, and alienated from his own by temperament, in sympathy, and in habits.

When these Athenian philosophers fail us, we had better rely on Curtius and Grote. Both have their

great and special merits. And if the twelve volumes of Grote are beyond the range of the ordinary reader with their mountains of detail and microscopic exaggeration of minute incidents and insignificant beings, Curtius in less than a third of the bulk has covered nearly the same ground with a more philosophic conception. Strictly speaking, there is not, and cannot be, a history of Greece. Greece is scattered broadcast over South-eastern Europe and North-western Asia. Greece was not so much a nation as a race, a movement, a language, a school of thought and art. And thus it comes that any history of Greece is utterly inadequate without such books as Müller's or Mahaffy's *Literature of Ancient Greece*, Winckelmann's *History of Ancient Art*, Fustel de Coulanges' *Cité antique*, and Mahaffy's *Social Life in Greece* and *Greek Life and Thought* or John Addington Symonds' delightful essays on *Greek Poets* and the scenery of Greece.

The twelve volumes of Grote's *History of Greece* are neither manageable nor necessary for any but regular scholars of the original authorities. But there are sections of his work of peculiar value and well within the scope of the general reader. These are: the account of the Athenian democracy (vol. iv. ch. 31); of the Athenian empire (vol. v. ch. 45); the famous chapters on Socrates and the Sophists (vol. viii. ch. 67, 68), and the account of Alexander's expedition (vol. xii). For the general description of Greece, Curtius is unrivalled, and in many things he is a valuable corrective of Grote's pedantic radicalism. But it is a serious drawback to Curtius as a historian that with his purist Hellenic sympathies he treats the history of Greece as closed by Philip of Macedon, whereas in one sense it may be said that the history of a nation then only begins. The

histories of Greece too often end with the death of Demosthenes, or the death of Alexander, though Freeman and Mahaffy have shown that neither the intellect nor the energy of the Greek race was at all exhausted. The German work of Holm, pronounced by Mahaffy to be amongst the very best, will soon be open to the English reader.

The historians of Rome, with two exceptions, are too diffuse, or too fragmentary : such mere epitomes or such uncritical compilations, that they have no such value for the general reader as the great historians of Greece. Yet there are few more memorable pages in history than are some of the best bits from the delightful story-teller Livy. We cannot trust his authority ; he has no pretence to critical judgment or the philosophic mind. He is no painter of character ; nor does he ever hold us spellbound with a profound thought, or a monumental phrase. But his splendid vivacity and pictorial colour, the epic fulness and continuity of his vast composition, the glowing patriotism and martial enthusiasm of his majestic theme, impress the imagination with peculiar force. It is a prose *Æneid*—the epic of the Roman commonwealth from *Æneas* to Augustus. It is inspired with all the patriotic fire of Virgil and with more than Horatian delight in the simple virtues of the olden time. For the first time a great writer devoted a long life to record the continuous growth of his nation over a period of eight centuries, in order to do honour to his country's career and to teach lessons of heroism to a feebler generation. Had we the whole of this stupendous work, we should perhaps more fully respect the originality as well as the grandeur of this truly Roman conception.

One of the abiding sorrows of literature is the loss of the 107 books, out of the 142 which composed the

entire series. They were complete down to the seventh century : now we have to be content with the 'epitomes,' or general table of contents. But 35 books, a little short of one quarter of the whole, have reached us. In these times of special research and critical purism, the merits of Livy are forgotten in the mass of his glaring defects. Uncritical he is, uninquiring even, nay, almost ostentatiously indifferent to exact fact or chronological reality. He seems deliberately to choose the most picturesque form of each narrative without any regard to its truth ; nay, he is too idle to consult the authentic records within reach. But we are carried away by the enthusiasm and stately eloquence of his famous *Preface* : we forgive him the mythical account of the foundation of Rome for the beauty and heroic simplicity of the primitive legends, and the immortal pictures of the early heroes, kings, chiefs and dictators. Where the facts of history are impossible to discover, it is something to have epic tales which have moved all later ages. And we may more surely trust his narrative of the Punic wars, which is one of the most fascinating episodes in the roll of the Muse of History.

She is still weeping bitter and silent tears for a loss even greater from the side of scientific record of the past. The Romanised Greek, Polybius, a thinker and patriot worthy of an older time, the wise and cultured friend of the second Scipio, wrote the history of Rome in forty books, for the seventy-four years of her history from the origin of the second Punic war to the end of the third and the final overthrow of Carthage. It was the crisis in the fortunes of Rome, one of the most crucial turning-points in the history of the world. And it found a historian, who was statesman, philosopher, and man of learning, curiously well placed to collect



trustworthy materials, and peculiarly endowed for just and independent judgment. In all the qualities of a historian but one, no other Greek but Thucydides can be placed beside him. But five of his forty books remain entire. His dry and prosaic method has cost him immortality and robbed us of all but a small remnant of this most precious record. Of all great historians he is the one most wanting in fire and in grace. If we would contrast the work of a mighty master of narrative with that of a scrupulous annalist, we may read the famous scene in the Carthaginian senate, when the second Punic war is declared to the ambassadors of Rome, as it is told by Polybius, and then turn to the same story in the stirring pages of Livy. It is the fashion now to neglect Plutarch; to our fathers of the last three centuries he was almost the mainstay of historical knowledge. His Greek is poor; his manner gossipy; his method uncritical; and his credulity unlimited. But he belongs himself to the ancient world that he describes. He is an ancient describing the look of the ancient heroes to us moderns. He was a moralist, not a historian, a painter of characters rather than a narrator of events. But with all this, Plutarch's forty-six *Parallel Lives* have a special value of their own. We must look on them as the spontaneous moralising of a fine old polytheistic preacher, recounting with enthusiasm the deeds of the famous chiefs of Greece and Rome; full of superstitious tales, traditional anecdotes, loose hearsay—by no means exact and critical history. The classical enthusiasm of the eighteenth century was nursed upon Plutarch's *Lives*. In his simple pages the genius of the ancient world stands out in living reality. One who knew his Plutarch would understand the genius of Greece and

Rome better than if he knew a hundred German monographs.

It is one of the cruel bereavements of Humanity that of his *Lives* no less than fourteen are lost; those of the foremost types of the ancient world. We have lost that of Epaminondas, the noblest of the Greeks, and of Scipio, the noblest of the old patrician chiefs. We have lost the life of Julius, and of all the earlier emperors; and, perhaps worst of all, we have lost the life of Trajan, the greatest of the emperors; the emperor whom Plutarch knew in life, and of whose majestic life and empire we have the scantiest record of all. It is a melancholy and interesting coincidence that Trajan, one of the grandest figures of the ancient world, to whom Plutarch dedicated one of his works, is almost unknown to us, though he may have been himself familiar with the *Parallel Lives*. History has strangely neglected to record the acts of one of the noblest of all rulers and the events of one of the most typical of all ages—mainly, it would seem, because his genius had given to his age such peace, well-being, and unbroken security.

Although so large a part of Roman history is known to us only through Greek writers, Rome produced at least one historian who may be set beside Thucydides himself. Tacitus was a philosopher, who, if inferior to Thucydides in calm judgment and insight into the compound forces of an entire age, was even greater than Thucydides as a master of expression and in his insight into the complex involutions of the human heart. The literature of history has nothing to compare with his gallery of portraits, with his penetration into character, his tragic bursts of indignation, his judicial sarcasms, and his noble elevation of soul. As a painter of character in a few memorable words, Thomas Carlyle

alone amongst historians comes near him. But Tacitus is vastly superior in monumental brevity, in reticence, in simplicity, and in dignity. There are pages of Tacitus, where we must go to Shakespeare himself, to Molière, Cervantes, Swift, or one of the great masters of character, to find the like of these dramatic strokes and living portraiture.

Tacitus, it is true, presents us in his *Histories* and *Annals* with the inner, that is, the Roman side of the empire alone. And we must correct his view with that of the provinces—Gaul, Spain, Britain, as seen by the larger and wider world of the West which was absorbing Rome in ways little intelligible to the proud Roman himself. And Tacitus' strange parody of the history of the Jews may serve to remind us how apt is the wisest believer in his own type of civilisation to be blind to the new moral forces which are gathering up to destroy it. Of Tacitus we now have an excellent English version (Church and Brodribb, 3 vols., 1868-1877); and all solid readers who care for great historical pictures may know the trenchant judgment on the empire under Augustus and Tiberius, the noble portraits of Germanicus and of Agricola, and above all his masterly account of the German races, our sole documentary record of the first stages in the civilisation of our Teutonic ancestors.

It is of course necessary to have some continuous summary of the history of Greece and Rome. We have already spoken of the general manuals of Heeren and of Rawlinson. For Greece, those who find Bishop Thirlwall's scholarly and sensible work too long, may content themselves with the summary of Dr. Smith or Sir G. W. Cox. For Rome we have the admirable manual of Dean Merivale (*General History of Rome*, 1875).

which condenses the history of 1200 years in 600 pages. For the career of Julius Cæsar and the foundation of the dictatorship which became the Roman empire, all should read the eleventh and twelfth chapters of *Mommsen's History of Rome*, in the fourth volume of the English translation.

For the ancient world we have several well-known and familiar works, which take us into the heart of its political, military, and intellectual life:—Xenophon's *Memoir of Socrates*, Arrian's *Persian Expedition of Alexander*, compiled in imperial times from original sources, Cæsar's *Commentaries*, and Cicero's *Letters to his Friends*. Xenophon, the fastidious and ambitious soldier who forsook Athens for Sparta, has given us the most faithful picture of Socrates, which is a revelation of the intellectual aspect of 'the eye of Greece' in the great age. Arrian compiled from the memoirs of eye-witnesses a truthful and complete picture of one of the most wonderful episodes in the history of mankind—the conquest of the East by the King of Macedon. Cæsar was almost as great in letters as he was in war. His account of the *Conquest of Gaul*, one of the great pivots of general history, was famous from its first appearance for the exquisite purity of its language, its masterly precision of truthfulness, its noble simplicity and heroic brevity. It has served all after ages as the first Latin text-book, and describes for us one of the most memorable episodes in history, recounted by its principal actor, himself the greatest name in the history of mankind. We need not be admirers of Cicero as a man, nor partial to his type of eloquence, to enjoy the graceful gossip of his familiar correspondence, with its wonderful picture of the modern side of Roman civilisation.

No rational understanding of history is possible without attention to geography and a distinct hold on the local scene of the great events. Nor again can we to any advantage follow the political, without a knowledge of the æsthetic and practical life of any ancient people. For the geography we need *Spruner's Atlas*, or *Freeman's Historical Geography*, Wordsworth's or Mahaffy's *Travels in Greece*, the first chapter of Curtius' *History of Greece*. Dr. Smith's *Dictionaries of Antiquities and of Biography*, A. S. Murray's *History of Sculpture*, or Lübke's *History of Art*, Middleton's *Rome*, Dyer's *Pompeii*, and our museums may serve for art.

It is no personal paradox, but the judgment of all competent men, that the *Decline and Fall* of Gibbon is the most perfect historical composition that exists in any language: at once scrupulously faithful in its facts; consummate in its literary art; and comprehensive in analysis of the forces affecting society over a very long and crowded epoch. In eight moderate volumes, of which every sentence is compacted of learning and brimful of thought, and yet every page is as fascinating as romance, this great historian has condensed the history of the civilised world over the vast period of fourteen centuries—linking the ancient world to the modern, the Eastern world to the Western, and marshalling in one magnificent panorama the contrasts, the relations, and the analogies of all. If Gibbon has not the monumental simplicity of Thucydides, or the profound insight of Tacitus, he has performed a feat which neither has attempted. 'Survey mankind,' says our poet, 'from China to Peru!' And our historian surveys mankind from Britain to Tartary, from the Sahara to Siberia, and weaves for one-third of all recorded time the epic of the human race.

Half the hours we waste over desultory memoirs of very minor personages and long-drawn biographies of mere mutes on the mighty stage of our world, would enable us all to know our *Decline and Fall*, the most masterly survey of an immense epoch ever elaborated by the brain of man. There is an old saying that over the portal of Plato's Academy it was written, 'Let no one enter here, till he is master of geometry.' So we might imagine the ideal School of History to have graven on its gates, 'Let none enter here, till he has mastered Gibbon.' Those who find his eight crowded volumes beyond their compass might at least know his famous first three chapters, the survey of the Roman empire down to the age of the Antonines; his seventeenth chapter on Constantine and the establishment of Christianity; the reign of Theodosius (ch. 32-34); the conversion of the Barbarians (ch. 37); the kingdom of Theodoric (ch. 39); the reign of Justinian (ch. 40, 41, 42); with the two famous chapters on Roman Law (ch. 43, 44). If we add others, we may take the career of Charlemagne (ch. 49); of Mahomet (ch. 50, 51); the Crusades (ch. 58, 59, which are not equal to the first-mentioned); the rise of the Turks (ch. 64, 65); the last siege of Constantinople (ch. 68); and the last chapters on the city of Rome (69, 70, 71).

Gibbon takes us into mediæval history, but he is by no means sufficient as a guide in it. The mediæval period is certainly difficult to arrange. In the first place, it has a double aspect—Feudalism and Catholicism—the organisation of the Fief and Kingdom, and the organisation of the Church. In the next place, these two great types of social organisation are extended over Europe from the Clyde to the Morea of Greece, embracing thousands of baronies, duchies, and kingdoms, each with a common

feudal and a common ecclesiastical system, but with distinct local unity and an independent national and provincial history. The facts of mediæval history are thus infinite and inextricably entangled with each other; the details are often obscure and usually unimportant, whilst the common character is striking and singularly uniform.

The true plan is to go to the fountain-head, and, at whatever trouble, read the best typical book of the age at first hand—if not in the original, in some adequate translation. I select a few of the most important:—Eginhardt's *Life of Charles the Great*; *The Saxon Chronicle*; Asser's *Life of Alfred*, which is at least drawn from contemporary sources; William of Tyre's and Robert the Monk's *Chronicle of the Crusades*; Geoffrey Vinsauf; Joinville's *Life of St. Louis*; Suger's *Life of Louis the Fat*; St. Bernard's *Life and Sermons* (see J. C. Morison's *Life*); Froissart's *Chronicle*; De Commynes' *Memoirs*; and we may add as a picture of manners, *The Paston Letters*.

But with this we must have some general and continuous history. And in the multiplicity of facts, the variety of countries, and the multitude of books, the only possible course for the general reader who is not a professed student of history is to hold on to the books which give us a general survey on a large scale. Limiting my remarks, as I purposely do, to the familiar books in the English language to be found in every library, I keep to the household works that are always at hand. It is only these which give us a view sufficiently general for our purpose. The recent books are sectional and special: full of research into particular epochs and separate movements. It is true that the older books have been to no small extent superseded, or at least corrected by later historical researches.

They no longer exactly represent the actual state of historical learning. They need not a little to supplement them; and something to correct them. Yet their place has not been by any means adequately filled. At any rate they are real and permanent *literature*. They fill the imagination and strike root into the memory. They form the mind; they become indelibly imprinted on our conceptions. They live: whilst erudite and tedious researches too often confuse and disgust the general reader. To the 'historian,' perhaps, it matters as little in what form a book is written, as it matters in what leather it is bound. Not so to the general reader. To teach him at all, one must fill his mind with impressive ideas. And this can only be done by true literary art. For these reasons I make bold to claim a still active attention for the old familiar books which are too often treated as obsolete to-day.

There are four books on mediæval history from which the last generation learned much; though we can hardly count any of them amongst the great books of history. Hallam's *Middle Ages* is now seventy-five years old; Guizot's *Lectures on Civilisation in Europe* is sixty-five years old; Michelet's early *History of France* is sixty years old; and Dean Milman's *Latin Christianity* is forty years old. They are all books that cannot be neglected: even though it is true that modern research has proved them to have not a few shortcomings and some positive errors. Yet withal, I know no books in familiar use, from which the general English reader can learn so much of the nature of the Middle Ages as in these.

Guizot's *Lectures on Civilisation*, in spite of its sixty-five years, in spite of the recent additions to all that we know of the origin of the feudal world, of mediæval law



and custom, of mediæval sovereignty, still remains the most valuable short conspectus of the mediæval system which the general reader has. His essay was the earliest attempt to explain by real historical research the great services to civilisation of the feudal monarchy and the Catholic Church, which Chateaubriand, Walter Scott, de Maistre, and Manzoni had already embodied in romantic episodes or in trenchant controversy. It is of prime importance for the historian to be conversant with the affairs of state, or at least to pass his life amidst politicians and practical chiefs. This is the strength of Thucydides, Xenophon, Polybius, Cæsar, Livy, Tacitus, de Commynes, and we may almost add Hume and Gibbon. But amongst modern historians there is no more conspicuous example of this than Guizot, a large part of whose life was passed in office and in the Chamber. He writes of Charlemagne, St. Louis, and Philip the Fair, like a man who has had charge of the destinies of a great nation. A work of real historical insight may be supplemented or corrected by later research. But no industry in the examination of documents will ever make a useful compilation into a great book of history.

Hallam's *Middle Ages* first appeared in 1818, and with Guizot's *Lectures on Civilisation in Europe*, ten years later, created an epoch in historical study. But Hallam continued to labour on his first work for thirty years and more of his long life; and the complete shape of the *Middle Ages* dates from 1848. Since then much has been added to our knowledge, especially as to the organisation of feudal relations, both in town, and country, in the history of the English constitution, and the land-system at home and abroad. But no book has filled the whole space occupied by Hallam

with his breadth of view and patient comparative method. At present, perhaps, the most valuable portions of his work are the first four chapters on France, Italy, and Spain, and the concluding chapter on the state of society, much of which, it is true, may now be corrected by later research. The account of Germany is much better read in Mr. Bryce's *Holy Roman Empire*, that of the church in Dean Milman, and that of the English constitution in Bishop Stubbs. One of the main wants of historical literature now is a book on the Middle Ages which should cover the whole of Europe, in its intellectual, its spiritual, and its political side, with all the knowledge that we have gained from the researches of the last fifty years. Unhappily, it seems as if history were condemned to the rigid limits of special periods, as if the philosophic grasp were pronounced to be obsolete by indefatigable research.

Michelet's *History of France* down to Francis I., although it is a collection of brilliant *pensées, caractères*, and *aperçus* rather than a continuous history, is a fine and stirring work of special value to the English reader. It is now sixty years old; but a century will not destroy its living inspiration. Hallam, the very antithesis of Michelet, one who was never once betrayed into an epigram or fired into poetry, has acknowledged in fit language the beauty and vigour of his French competitor. There are magnificent chapters on the eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries; and his picture of physical France, his story of Charles the Great, of Louis the Fat, Philip Augustus, St. Louis, Philip the Fair, of the Crusades, the Albigenses, the Communes, his chapters on Gothic architecture, on the English wars, and especially on Jeanne Darc, are unsurpassed in the pages of modern historical literature. Michelet

has some of the moral passion and insight into character of Tacitus, no little of the picturesque colour of Carlyle, and more than the patriotic glow of Livy. Alas! had he only something of the patient reserve of Thucydides, the simplicity and precision of Caesar, the learning and harmonious completeness of Gibbon! He is a poet, a moralist, a preacher, rather than a historian in the modern sense of the word. Yet with all his shortcomings (and his later work has but flashes of his old force), Michelet's picture of mediæval France will long remain an indispensable book.

Dean Milman's *Latin Christianity*, which appeared forty years ago, just misses, it may be, being one of 'the great books of history'—but will long hold its own as an almost necessary complement to Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*. It was avowedly designed as its counterpart, its rival, and in one sense its antidote. And we cannot deny that this aim has been, to a great extent, attained. It covers almost exactly the same epoch; it tells the same story; its chief characters are the same as in the work of Gibbon. But they are all viewed from another point of view and are judged by a different standard. Although the period is the same, the personages the same, and even the incidents are usually common to both histories, the subject is different, and the plot of the drama is abruptly contrasted. Gibbon recounts the dissolution of a vast system: Milman recounts the development of another vast system: first the victim, then the rival, and ultimately the successor of the first. Gibbon tells us of the decline and fall of the Roman empire: Milman narrates the rise and constitution of the Catholic Church—the religious and ecclesiastical, the moral and intellectual movements which sprang into full maturity as the political empire of Rome passed

through its long transformation of a thousand years. The scheme and ground-plan of Milman are almost perfect. Had he the prodigious learning, the super-human accuracy of Gibbon, that infallible good sense, that perennial humour, that sense of artistic proportion, the Dean might have rivalled the portly ex-captain of yeomanry, the erudite recluse in his Swiss retreat. He may not be quite strong enough for his giant's task. But no one else has even essayed to bend the bow which the Ulysses of Lausanne hung up on one memorable night in June 1787 in his garden study; none has attempted to recount the marvellous tale of the consolidation of the Christianity of Rome over the whole face of Western Europe during a clear period of a thousand years.

The whole of the closely-packed six volumes of *Latin Christianity* are possibly beyond the limits of many general readers. But we can point to those parts which may be best selected from the rest. The *Introduction* in the first book, and the *General Survey* which forms the fourteenth book at the end of the work, are the parts of the whole of the widest general grasp. To these we may add the chapters which treat of the greater Popes: Leo the Great in Book ii., Gregory the Great in Book iii., Hildebrand in Book vii., Innocent the third in Book ix., Boniface VIII. in Book xi.—the chapters on Theodoric, Charlemagne, the Othos, the Crusades, St. Bernard, St. Louis—those on the four Latin Fathers, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, and Gregory, the monastic orders of St. Benedict, St. Dominic, and St. Francis—the Conversion of the Barbarians, and the Reformers and Councils of the fifteenth century. As is natural and fortunate, the Dean is strongest and most valuable just where Gibbon is weakest or even misleading.

In his Library, Auguste Comte recommended as the complement of Gibbon, the *Ecclesiastical History* of the Abbé Fleury. But it seems in vain to press upon the general reader of English a work in French so bulky, so unfamiliar, and so far removed from us in England to-day both in date, in form, and in tone. It was published in 1690, more than two hundred years ago, and is in twenty volumes quarto, and only in part translated into English. It contains an excellent narrative, which was warmly praised by Voltaire. But it is entirely uncritical; it is of course not on the level of modern scholarship; and as the work of a prelate under the later reign of Louis XIV., it is naturally composed from the theological and miraculous point of view. The Abbé gives us the view of the Catholic world as seen by a sensible and liberal Catholic divine in the seventeenth century. The Dean has painted it as imagined by a somewhat sceptical and Protestant man of the world in the nineteenth.

When we pass from Mediæval to Modern History, we are confronted with the difficulty that modern history is infinitely the more intricate and varied, and that, as we advance, the histories become continually more and more devoted to special epochs and countries, and are minute researches into local incidents and chosen persons. The immediate matter in hand in this essay is to direct attention to *great books* of history, meaning thereby those works which take us to the inner life of one of the great typical movements, or which in manageable form survey some of the great epochs of general history. Such surveys for the last four centuries are exceedingly rare. There are many valuable standard works, which are supposed to be in every gentleman's library, and which are familiar enough to every his-

torical student. But they form a list that can hardly be compressed into one hundred volumes, and to master them is beyond the power of the average general reader to whom these pages are addressed. We can mention some of them: though they are hardly 'great books,' and neither in range of subject, in charm, or in insight, have they the stamp of Herodotus or Gibbon.

I am accustomed to recommend as a general summary the *Outline of Modern History* by Jules Michelet. It is unsurpassed in clearness and general arrangement. It begins with the taking of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453, and has been well translated and continued to our own day by Mrs. W. Simpson. I am also old-fashioned enough to rely on the *Manual* of a great historian—Heeren's *Political System of Europe* which covers almost exactly the same ground—though it is now more than eighty years old, not easily procurable in the English form, and avowedly restricted to the political relations of the European States. But its concise and masterly grouping, its good sense and just proportion, make it the model of a summary of a long and intricate period. But we must not ask more from it than it professes to give us. We shall look from it in vain for any account of the revolution directed by Cromwell or of the culture that gave splendour to the early years of Louis XIV.

Summaries and manuals are of course made for students and it would be vain to expect the general reader, who is not about to be 'extended' on the 'mark-system,' and who, tired with work, takes up a volume at his fireside, to commit to memory the dates and subdivisions which are the triumph of the examiner and the despair of the practical man. Records and summaries there must be, if only for reference and general clearness

of heads. We must to some extent group our periods ; and, without pretending to very minute details, the following may serve for practical purposes, and are those which are commonly adopted :—

1. The formation of the European monarchies and the rise of the modern State-System.
2. The revival of learning and the intellectual movement known as the Renaissance. This is synchronous with, and related to, the first mentioned.
3. The Reformation and the great religious wars down to the middle of the seventeenth century.
4. The dynastic, territorial, and colonial struggles from the Peace of Westphalia to the close of the Seven Years' War.
5. The struggle against autocracy in (*a*) Holland in the sixteenth century ; (*b*) England in the seventeenth century ; (*c*) America in the eighteenth century. This is a special phase of the general movements noted as 3 and 4.
6. The Revolution of the eighteenth century and its political, social, and industrial effects.

We will take each of these *six* movements in their order :—

I. For the first we have a book of established fame, now well entered on its second century, which still lives by virtue of its high powers of generalisation, its pellucid style, and sureness of judgment—Robertson's *Charles V.* In spite of the development of research in the last one hundred and thirty years, the famous *Introduction* or *Survey of Europe* from the fall of the Roman empire to the fifteenth century remains an indispensable book, the

appendix as it were, and philosophic completion of *The Decline and Fall*.

The volume on the Middle Ages is indeed one of those permanent and synthetic works which have been almost driven out of modern libraries by the growth of special studies, but it belongs to that order of general histories of which we are now so greatly in need. For the consolidation of States in Italy we must resort to Sismondi's *Italian Republics*, of which there is a small English abridgment; for that of France to Michelet; for Spain to Prescott's *Ferdinand and Isabella*; and for England to Hallam's *Constitutional History of England*; this, though fifty years have much impaired its value, still holds the field by its judicial balance of mind. For later authorities we must turn to the general *Histories of England* of J. R. Green and of Dr. F. Bright. But we can point to no work save that of Robertson which in one general view will give us the history of Europe in the sixteenth century.

II. For the Renaissance of Learning and Art, we have no better exponents than Burckhardt, Michelet, and Symonds. The German is full of learning and sound judgment; the Frenchman has a single volume of wonderful brilliancy and passion; the Englishman has produced a long series of works charged with learning and almost overloaded with ingenious criticism and superabundant illustration. But the Renaissance is best studied in the biographies of its leaders, Lorenzo de' Medici, Columbus, Bruno, Leonardo da Vinci, Michael Angelo, Rabelais, Erasmus, Ariosto, and Calderon—in the great paintings, buildings, inventions, and poems—in such books as those of Cellini, More, Montaigne, and Cervantes. A movement so subtle, so diffused, so



complex can have no history. But its spirit has been caught and embalmed by Michelet in some hundred pages of almost continuous epigram and poetry. A sort of *catalogue raisonnée* presenting its versatile and ingenious force may be best collected from a study of Hallam's great work—*The Literature of Europe in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries*.

III. For the Reformation we rely on Ranke's *History of the Popes*, especially for Germany. For England the history has been adequately told both by Green and by Froude; for Holland by Motley; for France by Michelet. It is here of course that the most violent partisanship comes in to disturb the tranquil judgment-seat of history. History becomes controversy rather than record. The Catholic will consult the splendid polemical invective of Bossuet—*The variations of Protestantism*. The Protestant will rely on the vehement impeachment of Merle D'Aubigné.

IV. The dynastic, territorial, and colonial struggles from the Peace of Westphalia to the close of the Seven Years' War have been well summarised by Heeren in his *Political System*, by Michelet in his summary of *Modern History*, and by Duruy in his *Histoire des Temps Modernes*. There is no book which can be said to enter into literature and gives an adequate picture of this period, unless it be Voltaire's *Age of Louis XIV. and Louis XV.* Lord Stanhope's *Historical Essay of Queen Anne and of England*, Carlyle's *Frederick the Great*, H. Martin's *Histoire de France*, Lecky's excellent *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, are standard works for this period; but they are all far too voluminous, too special, and diffuse for the purposes of the

general reader, nor do they enter into the scheme of the present essay.

V. Nor again is it possible to put into the hands of the general reader of English any single work which will give an adequate conception of the successive struggles for freedom in Holland, England, and America. They must be read in the separate histories, of which there are some that are excellent, though all of a formidable length and bulk. The nine volumes which Motley devoted in his three works on the struggle in Holland, the three works of Guizot on the English Revolution and its leaders, the standard work of Bancroft on the United States, form a series beyond the resources of the mere general reader as distinct from the student.

There are, however, three works which, whilst being in form and in bulk within the compass of the average reader, give adequate portraits of the three noble chiefs of the Dutch, the English, and the American revolutions. Motley's *Rise of the Dutch Republic*, Carlyle's *Letters and Speeches of Cromwell*, and Washington Irving's *Life of Washington*, are all indispensable books to one who desires to know the work of three of the great heroes of the Protestant republics. And these three are peculiarly suited for the biographical method. For not only were they each the undoubted chiefs of great historic movements, but they were all three men of singularly pure and magnanimous life, who each embodied the highest type of the age which they inspired.

Carlyle's *Cromwell* has definitely formed the view that Englishmen take of their own history and even their view of their political system. It is one of the most splendid monuments of historical genius, for it

reversed the false judgment which, for two centuries, political and religious bigotry had passed on the greatest ruler that these islands ever knew, and formally enthroned him on the love and admiration of all thinking men. It is needful to bear in mind that this great work is not a *Life of Cromwell*; it was not so designed; it is not so in result. It is the materials annotated for a biography of Cromwell which Carlyle never wrote, and which is yet to be written. And it is essential to have alongside of this masterpiece of industry and genius, a continuous history of the whole period from the accession of Charles I. to that of William III. With all its defects, we shall find that told in the two works of Guizot—*The History of the English Revolution* and the *Life of Cromwell*—as they appear in two volumes in the English version. From the enormous detail of Mr. Gardiner's works on the period, and their still incomplete state, the general reader will be content to trust to the fine narrative as we read it in Green's *Short History*. If we hesitate to add to his *Cromwell* Mr. Carlyle's *Friedrich the Second*, it is on account of its preposterous length, its interminable digressions, its trivial personalities and tedious scandal; because, with all its amazing literary brilliancy, it entirely omits to give us any conception of Frederick as a creative civil statesman, —though this is the character in which after ages will principally honour him.

VI. For the Revolution of 1789 we have the wonderful book of Carlyle, perhaps the most striking extant example of the poetical method applied to history. It is an enduring book; and it has now passed into its sixth decade and that immortality which, by copy-right law, enables the public to buy it for a shilling.

The poetical and pictorial method too often ends in caricature and gives tempting occasions for telling portraiture. And both in his loves and his hates, Carlyle has too often proved to be extravagant or unjust, and sometimes flatly mistaken in his facts. With all its shortcomings it is a great book: which, in literary skill, has not been surpassed by any prose of our century, and which, as historical judgment, has deeply modified the social and political ideas of our age. But as for the *Cromwell* we need a complement, if not a corrective, so we need it far more for the *French Revolution*. We may find it in Von Sybel's or in Michelet's *French Revolution*, or, better still, in the clear, judicial, and just summary of Mignet. For the history of the Great War, we may turn to the abridged edition of Sir Archibald Alison's in a single volume, as fairly adequate and satisfactory. This avoids nearly all his besetting faults, and contains a very fair share of his undoubted merits. A far superior book, which takes in the whole period from 1792 to 1848, is the *History of Modern Europe* by the late C. A. Fyffe, too early lost to historical literature.

For the growth of our social and industrial life in the present century—a subject of cardinal importance which must practically determine our political sympathies—it is too obvious that no adequate general account exists. Perhaps in the whole range of historical literature no book is more urgently needed than a real history of the development of industry and social existence in Europe in the present century. The movement itself is European rather than national and social and economic rather than political. In the meantime we have no other resource except to follow up this complex evolution of modern society, both locally and sectionally.

Of the various extant histories, the most important is Harriet Martineau's *History of England from the Peace of 1815*; perhaps the most generally interesting is Charles Knight's *Popular History of England*, the later portions of which are less superficial and elementary than the earlier. The modern English histories of Spencer Walpole, Justin McCarthy, and W. N. Molesworth, are fair, honest, and pleasant to read.

In these few notes on great books of history, it does not lie in my plan to say much about national or special histories. From my own point of view the life of Humanity in its fulness is the central aim of sound knowledge; and that which substitutes the national for the human interest, that which withdraws the attention from organic civilisation to special incidents, has been long too closely followed. There is always a tendency to concentrate the interest on national history; and it needs no further stimulus. Nor are the details of our national history ever likely to pall on the intelligent reader. But histories on such a scale, that each octavo volume records but a year or two, and takes nearly as long to compose: on such a canvas, that every person who crosses the stage and each incident that occurs within the focus of the instrument, is recorded, not in the degree of its importance, but in the degree of the book that the accessible materials may fill—whatever may be their value, are beyond the purport of this chapter.

The only aim of the present piece is to suggest to a busy man a few books in which he may catch some conception of the central lines of human evolution. A true philosophy of human progress (if we could find it) would be a practical manual of life and conduct: and of such a philosophy, history in the larger sense must

be the bible and basis. Mark, learn, and inwardly digest it, not as historical romance to pass a few idle hours, but as the revelation of the slow and interrupted, but unceasing development of the organism of which we are cells and germs. What we need to know are the leading lines of this mighty biography, the moral and social links that bind us to the series of our ancestors in the Past. The great truth which marks the science of our time is the sense of unity in the course of civilisation, and of organic evolution in its gradual growth. To gain a conception of this course we must set ourselves in a manly way to study, not the picture books of history, but the classical works as they came from the master hands of the great historians. Wherever it is possible we must go to the original sources, being sure that no story is ever so faithful as that told by those who themselves saw the great deed and heard the voices of the great men.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE HISTORY SCHOOLS

#### *An Oxford Dialogue*<sup>1</sup>

ON one of those bright misty days at Oxford, when the grey towers are dimly seen rising from masses of amber and russet foliage, when reading men enjoy a brisk walk in the keen afternoon air, to talk over the feats of the Long and the chances of the coming Schools, a tutor and a freshman were striding round the meadows of Christ Church. The Reverend Æthelbald Wessex, called by undergraduates 'the Venerable Bede,' was taking a tutorial grind with his young friend, Philibert Raleigh, who had come up from Eton with a brilliant record. The Admirable Crichton, as Phil was named by his admirers, was expected to do great things in the History School: his essay had won him the scholarship, and even the Master admitted that he had read some which were worse. Phil was enlarging on the lectures of the new Regius Professor.

'We are in luck,' said he, 'to be reading for the Schools at a time when the Professor is one of the first of living writers; his lectures are a lesson in English literature, instead of a medley of learned "tips."'

'I hope, my dear boy,' said the Venerable, 'that you are not referring to the late Professor in that rather

<sup>1</sup> *Fortnightly Review*, vol. liv. N.S. October 1893.

superficial remark of yours, for he was certainly one of the most consummate historians of modern times.'

'Oh, no,' said Phil, in an apologetic tone; 'I never heard Dr. Freeman lecture at all, and I have not yet finished the third volume of *The Norman Conquest*. But surely he is hardly in it as a writer with Froude, whose history one enjoys to read as one enjoys *Quentin Durward* or *Ivanhoe*?'

'You are giving yourself away, dear boy,' replied the tutor, with his shrewd smile, 'when you class the *History of England* with a novel. Mr. Froude's enemies (and I am certainly not one of them) have never said worse of him than that. I am afraid that the first thing which Oxford will have to teach you is that the business of a historian is to write history, not romance.'

'Of course,' said the freshman, a little put out by the snub, 'I should not compare the *History of England* to romance, nor, I suppose, do you. But we know that all the histories in the world which have permanent life are composed with literary genius, and are delightful to read in themselves. A great historian has to write history, but he also has to write a great book.'

'Literature is one thing,' said the Venerable, in somewhat oracular tones, 'and history is another thing. The τέλος of history is Truth. She may be more attractive to some minds when clothed in shining robes; but the historian has to worship at the shrine of *nuda Veritas*, and it is no business of his to care for the drapery she wears. What I mean is, that history implies indefatigable research into recorded facts. That is the essence: the form is mere accident.'

'The form of the sentences may be a secondary thing,' pleaded the Crichton, 'but, surely, the vivid power of striking home which marks every great book



is essential to a history intended to survive. Would the Master have given all that labour to Thucydides if the whole of his work had been occupied with monotonous accounts of how the Spartans marched into Attica, and how the Athenians sent seven ships to the coast of Thrace? Thucydides is a *κτῆμα εἰς αἰ* because of the elaborate speeches, the account of the plague, the civil war in Corcyra, the siege of Syracuse, and the last sea-fight in the harbour. These are the things which make Thucydides immortal, and remind one of the messenger's speech in the *Persæ*. It is these magnificent pictures of the ancient world which help us to get over the wearisome parade of hoplites and sling-men, and battles of frogs and mice in obscure bays.'

'This will never do,' replied the tutor. 'We shall quite despair of your class, if you begin by calling "wearisome" any fact ascertainable in recorded documents. The business of the historian is to examine the evidence for what has ever happened in any place or time; and nothing which is *true* can be wearisome to the really historical mind.'

'And are we expected to enjoy our *Codex Diplomaticus* as much as our Macaulay and our Froude?'

'We do not ask you to enjoy,' said the Bede, in his dry way, 'we only ask you to know—or, to be quite accurate, to satisfy the examiners. The brilliant apologist of Henry VIII. seems to give you delightful lectures; but I can assure you that the Schools know no other standard but that of accurate research, in the manner so solidly established by the late Regius Professor whom we have lost.'

'Do you think that a thoughtful essay on the typical movements in one's period would not pay?' asked the Admirable one, in a rather anxious tone.

'My young friend,' said the Reverend Ethelbald, 'you will find that dates, authorities, texts, facts, and plenty of diphthongs pay much better. You are in danger of mortal heresy, if you think that anything will show you a royal road to these. If there is one thing which, more than another, is the mark of Oxford to-day, it is belief in contemporary documents, exact testing of authorities, scrupulous verification of citations, minute attention to chronology, geography, palæography, and inscriptions. When all these are right, you cannot go wrong. For all this we owe our gratitude to the great historian we have lost.'

'O yes,' said Phil airily, for he was quite aware that he was thought to be shaky in his pre-Egberht chronicles; 'I am not saying a word against accuracy. But all facts are not equally important, nor are all old documents of the same use. I have been grinding all this term at the *History of the Norman Conquest*, verifying all the citations as I go along, and making maps of every place that is named. I have only got to the third volume, you know, and I don't know now what it all comes to. Freeman's West-Saxon scuffles on the downs seem to me duller than Thucydides' fifty, hoplites and three hundred sling-men; and I have not yet come to anything to compare with the Syracusan expedition.'

'This is a bad beginning for a history man,' said Bæda. 'Is this how they talked at Eton of the greatest period of the greatest race in the annals of the world? All history centres round the early records of the English in the three or four centuries before the first coming of the Jutes, and the three or four after it. Let me advise you to take as your period, say, the battle of Ellandun, and get up all about it, and how "its stream was choked with slain," and what led up to it and what came after.'

it. Do you know anything more interesting, as you call it, than that?

'Yes,' said Phil readily, with all the recklessness of a smart freshman; 'why, Ellandun was merely the slogging of savages, of whom we know nothing but a few names. What I call fine history is Macaulay's famous account of the state of England under the Stuarts, or Froude's splendid picture of the trial and execution of Mary of Scots. That is a piece of writing that no one can ever forget.'

'Ah, just so!' said the Venerable, in that awful monosyllabic way which he had caught from the Master; 'splendid picture!—piece of writing!—fine history!—here we generally take "fine history" to be—ah! false history.'

'But fine history need not be false,' said Phil.

'We usually find it so,' replied his tutor, 'and it is ten times worse than false quantities in a copy of longs and shorts. There is no worse offence outside the statute book (and many offences in it are less immoral) than the crime of making up a picture of actual events for the sake of literary effect, with no real care for exact truthfulness of detail. A historical romance, as they call novels of past ages, is often a source of troublesome errors; but, at any rate, in a novel we know what to expect. It is a pity that Scott should talk nonsense about Robin Hood in *Ivanhoe*, and that Bulwer introduced Caxton into the *Last of the Barons*. But no one expects to find truth in such books, and every one reads them at his own peril. In a history of England it is monstrous to be careless about references, and to trust to a late authority.'

'But no decent historian ever does intend to state what he knows to be an error,' said Phil, somewhat surprised at the warmth of the West Saxon's indignation.

'I should think not indeed,' said Wessex; 'no one but a thief intends to take what is not his own, and no one but a liar means to state what he knows to be untrue. But the historian of all men is bound by the sanctities of his office to what we call in Roman law *summa diligentia*. And to be thinking of his "pictures," of the scheme of his colours and other literary effects, forms a most dangerous temptation to adopt the picturesque form of a story in place of the recorded truth. Unfortunately, as we know to our sorrow, the materials of the historian are of almost every sort—good, doubtful, and worthless; the so-called histories go on copying one another, adding something to heighten the lights out of quite second-rate authority; a wrong reference, a false date, a hearsay anecdote gets into accepted histories, and it costs years of labour to get the truth at last. If you ever hope to be a historian, you must treat historical falsehood as you would a mad dog, and never admit a phrase or a name which suggests an untruth.'

'Has not this purism been a little overdone?' said the innocent freshman. 'I remember that Freeman once told us he could not bear to speak of the Battle of Hastings, lest some one should imagine that it began on the sea-shore.'

'A fine example of scrupulous love of truth,' replied the Bede, 'and I wish that all histories of England had been written in a similar spirit. Can anything be more unscholarly than a readiness to accept a statement which we have not probed to the core, simply because it works up into a telling picture, or will point an effective paragraph? It is positively dishonest! And some of them will quote you a passage which you discover, on collating it with the original, has a blunder in every sentence, and a mistranslation in every page. If you write a romance, you may go to your imagination for your facts. If you

write history, you should scrupulously extract the best contemporary record, and throw everything else into the fire. I sometimes wish that histories were not published at all in the current English of literature, but were plain and disconnected propositions of fact, like the cuneiform inscriptions of Daryavush at Behistun.'

'Surely,' cried Phil, with a laugh, 'that would be a little dull! It would be a mere lexicon. No one could get up Facciolati or Littré as we get up Herodotus. Besides, the enormous number of propositions, each of which might fairly be called "truth," would make history impossible even for the most prodigious memory.'

'You forget,' said the tutor, 'that we treat history in "periods" of short or, at any rate, of manageable length. Nobody has any business out of his own "period," and if he trespasses on to another man's "period," he is pretty certain to be caught. The "periods" in our schools are far, far too long, and encourage superficial and flashy habits of reading. I remember dear old Bodley, late Professor of Palæography, who was before your time, saying that ten years in the fourteenth century was about as much as any man should try to master. He died, poor old boy, before his great book was ever got into shape at all; and perhaps ten years is rather short for a distinct period. But it takes a good man to know as much as a century, as it ought to be known. And one of our greatest living masters in history, with enormous industry and perseverance, just manages to write the events of one year in the seventeenth century within each twelve-months of his own laborious life.'

Phil could stand this no longer. With a whoop and a bound (he had just won the long jump in his college sports) he cleared the broad ditch, and alighted clean in the meadow round which they were tramping.

'Why,' he cried, as a second bound brought him back again to the side of his Venerable friend, 'at that rate we should want at least a hundred works, I suppose in ten volumes each, or a thousand volumes in all, cram full of gritty facts of no good to any one. All this week I have been entering in my note-book such bits as this:—"Ecgrith marched to a place called the Hoar Apple-Tree. It is not known where this is, or why he went there. He left it the next day, and neither he nor it are ever mentioned again in the chronicles." What is the good to me of knowing that?' he asked, as if a cheeky freshman was likely to put the Reverend Æthelbald into a tight place.

'Bad, bad!' said the tutor, who began to fear that he was wasting his time on Phil, 'you will never be a credit to your college if you can make game of "truth" like that! One would think a young man who hoped to do something would care to know a few true facts about his English forbears a thousand years ago. But the question is not what you care to know, but what you ought to know; and every Englishman ought to know every word in the *Saxon Chronicle*, to say nothing of the rest. Nor is it a question at all about your thousand volumes of history, the bulk of which deal with "periods" that do not concern you at all. Your thousand volumes, too, is a very poor estimate after all. You would find that not ten thousand volumes, perhaps not a hundred thousand volumes, would contain all the truths which have ever been recorded in contemporary documents, together with the elucidations, comments, and various amplifications which each separate truth would properly demand.'

'But at this rate,' said the freshman gloomily, 'I shall never get beyond Ecgrith and the other break-jaw Old

English sloggers. When we come up to Oxford we never seem to get out of an infinite welter of "origins" and primitive forms of everything. I used to think the Crusades, the Renaissance, Puritanism, and the French Revolution, were interesting epochs or movements. But here lectures seem to go round and round the Mark-system, or the aboriginal customs of the Jutes. We are told that it is mere literary trifling to take any interest in Richelieu and William of Orange, Frederick of Prussia, or Mirabeau and Danton. The history of these men has been adequately treated in very brilliant books which a serious student must avoid. He must stick to Saxon charters and the Domesday Survey.

'Of course, he must,' said the tutor, 'if that is his "period"—and a very good period it is. If you know how many houses were inhabited at Dorchester and Bridport at the time of the Survey, and how many there had been in the Old-English time, you know something definite. But you may write pages of stuff about what smatterers call the "philosophy of history," without a single sentence of solid knowledge. When every inscription and every manuscript remaining has been copied and accurately unravelled, then we may talk about the philosophy of history.'

'But surely,' said Crichtonius mirabilis, 'you don't wish me to believe that there is no intelligible evolution in the ages, and that every statement to be found in a chronicle is as much worth remembering as any other statement?'

'You have got to remember them all,' replied the Reverend Æthelbald dogmatically, 'at any rate, all in your "period." You may chatter about "evolution" as fast as you like, if you take up Physical Science and go to that beastly museum; but if you mention "evolution"

in the History School, you will be gulfed—take my word for it! I daresay that all statements of fact—*true* statements I mean—may not be of equal importance; but it is far too early yet to attempt to class them in order of value. Many generations of scholars will have to succeed each other, and many libraries will have to be filled, before even our bare materials will be complete and ready for any sort of comparative estimate. All that you have to do, dear boy, is to choose your period (I hope it will be Old-English somewhere)—mark out your “claim,” as Californian miners do, and then wash your lumps, sift, crush quartz, till you find ore, and don’t cry “Gold!” till you have had it tested.’

This was a hard saying to his Admirable young friend, who felt like the rich young man in the Gospel when he was told to sell all that he had and to follow the Master. ‘I have no taste for quartz-crushing,’ said he gloomily; ‘what I care for are Jules Michelet on the Middle Ages, Macaulay’s pictures of Charles II. and his court—(wonderful scene that, the night of Charles’s seizure at Whitehall!) Carlyle on Mirabeau and Danton, and Froude’s Reformation and Armada. These are the books which stir my blood. Am I to put all these on the shelf?’

‘Certainly! put them away this very day till you have got your class and have gone on a yachting holiday: when you may put them in your cabin with Scott and Dumas,’ said the Venerable, in his archiepiscopal manner. ‘Let me advise you not to waste your precious hours with novels. Michelet, with his stale Victor-Hugo epigrams and his absurd references to the *Bibliothèque Nationale*—*Cabinet de Versailles*—*portrait du Louvre*—as if that was serious history. You might as well put the *Trois Mousquetaires* in your list of



books in the History School. Macaulay is all very well and a real reader, of course; but he had always one eye on his sentences, and he would almost misquote a manuscript for the sake of a smart antithesis. There is far too much about French harlots; but the worst vice of his book is, that it is amusing, which is the only real fault in Gibbon. Carlyle is good on Cromwell, though he is dreadfully prejudiced; he had never seen the Clark Papers and consequently he has to be put right on a hundred points. And as to his *French Revolution*, it reads to me like an extract from Rabelais; and what on earth can you have to do with the Encyclopædists, Girondins, Mountain, and *Sans-culottes*?

'Why, Oscar at Eton used to tell us, that no part of history was more essential than all that led up to the Revolution of 1789, and all that has led down from it to our present day, and John Morley says the same,' replied the unhappy fresher.

'Oscar's a radical and John is a terrorist,' replied the Venerable, quite annoyed at the lad's pertinacity and his shallow turn of mind. 'The French Revolution is the happy hunting-ground of all the phrase-mongers like Carlyle, the doctrinaires like Louis Blanc, the epigrammatists like Michelet and Taine, and the liars like Thiers and Lamartine. There is no history to be got out of it for a century or two, till all the manuscripts have been deciphered and all the rubbish that has been published is forgotten.'

'Well, but come,' said Phil stoutly, in his last ditch, 'you will not bar Froude, who made up his history at Simancas, and got all his facts from unpublished manuscripts?'

'Simancas! Facts! Oh, oh!' laughed the Reverend

Æthelbald, with his grim West-Saxon chuckle. 'Simancas indeed! where, what, how much? what volume or what bundle, what page, and what folio? *MSS. penes me*—is a very convenient reference, but historians require a little more detail than this. I am not going to say one word against the Regius Professor, who is an old friend of mine and has written some very beautiful pieces; but, when you talk about "facts," I must put you on your guard. If you never read the *Saturday Review* on Froude's *Becket*, you had better do so at once. They were telling a good story in Common Room the other day about the reviewer. He hated music, and so when he intended to send a smasher to the *Saturday*, he got some one to play him "The Battle of Prague," or the "Carnaval de Venise," which would make him dancing mad, till you could hear the old lion's tail lashing his sides. I never went into the references myself—it is not in my period—but all I say is this—that *if* the references and citations are as full of mistakes as the *Saturday* said (mind you, I only say *if*—for I take no part in the quarrel), it is worse than picking a pocket. People may wonder how it is possible for such things to be done by a dear old man whom we all love, who is the soul of honour in private life, and who says such beautiful things about religion, morality, and the ethics of statesmen. Well! I don't know; but in history you cannot trust a fellow who tries to be interesting. If he pretends to be "philosophical," you may know him to be an impostor. But, if he aims at being interesting or at anything like a fine picture, he is not far off saying the thing that is not.'

'Come, now,' cried Phil with spirit, for he felt that his turn had come, 'you may talk about the *Saturday* articles, which are ancient history in the bad sense of

the term, but what do you say to the *Quarterly* articles, and the palpable blunders it exposes? What about Wace's "palisades" at Hastings? And why didn't Freeman cite the Abbé Baudri? And why did he misquote the Survey over and over again? And why are we not to use the fine old English term, "Battle of Hastings"—the only name given in the Tapestry, Guy of Amiens, and the rest—and are told we must always use, if we value *truth*, the term, "Battle of Senlac"—a mere mythical phrase—a piece of affectation of "dear old Orderic" in his Norman monastery? Why, years ago a man in the *Nineteenth Century* pointed out that to talk nowadays of the Battle of Senlac was as absurd as if a Frenchman were now to try to rechristen the Battle of Waterloo the Battle of Hougoumont! What do you say to the *Quarterly* on the Norman Conquest?' asked Phil impetuously, for he felt that he had got his knife into the Bede.

'I am sure we need not mind all these anonymous personalities,' said the Venerable one somewhat stiffly, for he felt that the last *Quarterly* article was rather a nasty hit; and as yet he had not the remotest idea how it ought to be answered. 'But here, bless me!' he cried, 'comes Middleman, of the House; what brings him to Oxford just now, I wonder.' And indeed, the tutor was not at all sorry that the conversation with his young friend should be suddenly broken off.

'Dear old man, what luck for me to meet you,' said the newcomer genially; 'I am going to examine in the Law School, and have run up for a couple of days to consult about the papers. I am staying with Bryce,' he explained. Jack Middleman, Q.C., was a young lawyer of much promise; he was already in Parliament and had expectations of office when Lord Salisbury returns

to power. Though he had been twelve years in good practice, he kept up his reading and his love of Oxford. The Courts were not sitting, and he had run up to see some of the residents.

'Our new scholar, Raleigh,' said Wessex, introducing Phil to the Q.C.; 'he is attending the lectures of the Regius Professor of History, and I am trying to show him the difference between the late Professor and the present. You can tell him what Freeman was, for you used to be one of his ardent admirers and closest henchmen.'

'Yes, indeed,' said Middleman; 'he was a noble scholar, and I read and re-read every line he wrote. But there is a good deal to be said for the other method of work.'

'Just so,' said Phil, much relieved. 'I have been sticking up for Froide's pictures of Henry VIII, Elizabeth and Mary of Scots, the Reformation and the Armada. I won't believe that literary history is quite done yet.'

'Literary history!' laughed Wessex, who had recovered his good humour; 'why not say melodious science!—delicious philosophy!—graceful law! or any other paradoxical confusion of metaphors?' 'Literary history' is a contradiction in terms, is it not, Middleman?

'Well,' said the lawyer, who was great at *Nisi prius*. 'Let us know what we mean by literary history. History in which the narrative of events is made subservient to literary effect is an impudent swindle. But the history which has no quality of literature at all, neither power of expression nor imaginative insight, is nothing but materials, the bricks and stones out of which some one one day might build a house. If

"literary history" means Lamartine's *History of the Girondists*, it is a sneaking form of the historical novel. But if literary history means Tacitus and Gibbon, it is the highest and the true form of history. What have you been lecturing upon this term, Wessex?

'Well,' said the Venerable, 'for the last three terms we have been on the West-Saxon coinage, and the year before that I took up the system of *frith-borrow*.'

'I should like to hear your course on the legal and administrative reforms of the Norman Kings,' said the lawyer; 'it is a fine subject, from which we in the Temple might learn more than from *Meeson and Welsby*.'

'I have not reached the Norman Conquest yet,' said the Reverend Æthelbald simply, 'for we have been ten years over the Old-English times; but I hope to get down to Eadweard before I leave the college.'

'You have got so fearfully *gründlich* since my time,' said Jack, 'that I feel quite out of it at Oxford. History seems to be seen nowadays with some such apparatus as the naturalists describe the eye of a fly magnified to ten thousand diameters. Now, I used to think Gibbon to be the type of a great historian. He gives you in eight volumes the history of the civilised world, for a period not short of a thousand years, with a scholar's grasp of the recorded facts, a masterly insight into the leading movements, and a style that moves on like a Roman triumph in one unbroken but varied pageant. You have not given up Gibbon at Oxford, have you?' said the lawyer.

'Oh no,' replied the tutor; but he added with the scintilla of a sneer, 'Gibbon made some mistakes, you know; and in the last hundred years a good deal has been discovered that he never heard of. I always warn

our young people to read Gibbon with great caution, and never without their Muratori and their Pertz at hand. It isn't possible, is it, asked the tutor in that sly way of his which so much frightened undergraduates, 'to put the true facts of a century into five hundred pages?'

'You don't want *all* the facts,' said Jack decisively, 'and you could not remember or use a tenth part of them if you could get them. And, what is more, you cannot get at the exact truth of every fact, however much you labour. Such minute accuracy in unimportant trifles is not only utterly unattainable, but it would be miserable pedantry to look for it.'

'Trifles!' cried out the Venerable in horror; 'you don't call any historical truths trifles, do you?'

'Yes! I call it an unimportant trifle,' said Jack, 'whether Ælfgifu stayed one day or two days at Cant-warabyrig, and it is waste of time to discuss the question in fifty pages. You see that you cannot get at the exact facts for all your pains. You know the row about Freeman's palisades at the Battle of Hastings. I pass no opinion, for I would not waste my time over such rubbish, and I don't care a *scat* or a *scilling* whether there were palisades at Senlac or not. I daresay Freeman made slips like other people, possibly blunders—it would be a miracle if he did not. But all this fuss about his blunders, and much of the fuss he made about Froude's blunders, is poor fun. Freeman was a consummate historical scholar, and Froude is an elegant historical writer, and both have given us most interesting and valuable books, for which we ought to be truly grateful, however widely the two books differ in method.'

'Does not Freeman overdo his love of the Old English?' said Phil.

'Is not Froude a blind advocate of Henry VIII.?' asked the tutor.

'Both of them, no doubt, have very strong personal feelings and keen party interests,' said the Q.C., 'and both might have been free from much of what the world calls their bias or their prejudice, if they had been accustomed to deal with history in a far more general or organic spirit as the biography of mankind; and if both had not striven to unravel every incident in their limited periods, much as we seek to unravel the facts of a murder or a fraud. When we have a great trial in court, we have the living witnesses before us; we confront them with the accused; we examine them on oath, we cross-examine them, and re-examine them; and then my Lord sums up the evidence without any kind of feeling in the matter, and twelve jurymen have got to decide. Well, after all that, we know the jury do sometimes toss up for the verdict; they are very often wrong, but we seldom hang the innocent man or let off a confirmed rogue. With all our pains, and the cross-examination of living witnesses, we are often beaten, and admit that we cannot get to the bottom of it. No lawyer would hope to find out the true story of anything if a witness could never be brought into court, and if no evidence could ever be sifted by cross-examination. But cross-examination is always impossible to the historian. You historians have only to rely on the most plausible story you can find in a bundle of old papers, the origin of which is usually doubtful. How can you extract anything that we should call legal evidence in court, and how can you get "at truth" by a method of investigation which any lawyer would tell you was ridiculous?'

'Do you mean to tell us that the facts of history

are not to be discovered by competent research?' asked the tutor in dismay.

'Certainly, the general faces of history are ascertainable in all their leading characters, if we are content to strike an average, or to look at sufficiently wide epochs and at the dominant tendency and creative spirits. Research and insight together will enable you to grasp the main features of an age and the essential qualities of a great man. But no research and no insight, and no labour and no subdivision of labour will ever enable you to reach the literal and particular truth about every minor incident, or to penetrate to the inner motives and secret disposition of every man and woman who crosses the stage of history. We cannot do this for contemporary persons and events around us, with all the methods of inquiry which contemporary facts and characters admit. Much less can we do it for distant ages, with nothing but the remnants of meagre and suspicious records. People are still disputing in the newspapers about the famous ball before the Battle of Waterloo, and why Bazaine surrendered Metz, and how the Archbishop was killed or the Tuileries burnt down in the commune of Paris. If the exact truth of what happened a generation or two ago is often obscure whilst hundreds of eye-witnesses are still living, how can you be certain whether Ha old built a palisade at Battle or not?'

'If he didn't,' cried Wessex, in a visible pet, 'I will give up Freeman and the Old English for ever!'

'I have far too great admiration for Freeman,' said the young M.P., 'to stake his reputation on a matter of stakes. No! Freeman was an indefatigable inquirer into early records, but he muddled away his sense of proportion. He was not a philosopher like Thucydides



and Tacitus, nor a great writer like Robertson and Gibbon; and he made the mistake of all specialists, that labour and minuteness can do the work of imagination and insight. The microscopic eye, with its power of ten thousand diameters, will, after all, only show an infinite series of minute species. It will not put them together, nor will it make an intelligible portrait of a whole. Froude is a fine writer, who has painted a set of brilliant scenes; but to understand the great religious and intellectual forces of the sixteenth century in Europe requires a far larger range than is disclosed at Simancas, and a deeper philosophy than Carlyle's, which may be summed up as detestation of Popery and the people. A great history cannot be made either by microscopic analysis or by pictorial bravura. The palæo-photo-graphic method only gives you a shapeless pile of separate bricks. The chiaroscuro impressionist method will give you some glowing pictures; but then wicked people start up and say they are not true, and not fair.

'What method, then, has to be followed by any great history?' cried out in the same breath the tutor and the freshman.

'Well, what I would advise a young man going into the historical line to bespeak is—first, indefatigable research into all the accessible materials; secondly, a sound philosophy of human evolution; thirdly, a genius for seizing on the typical movements and the great men; and lastly, the power of a true artist in grouping subjects and in describing typical men and events. All four are necessary; and you seem to think at Oxford that the first is enough without the rest. But, unless you have a real philosophy of history, you have nothing but your own likings and dislikings to direct your

judgment of men, and movements. Unless you have the insight to select and classify your facts, you and your readers will be lost in a sea of details. Not one fact in a hundred is worth preservation, just as biology could only exist as a science by judicious selection of typical forms. To do anything else is to assume that induction could take place in logic, as Aldrich says, *per enumerationem simplicem*. And lastly, unless you can impress on your readers' minds a vivid idea of some given world or some representative man, you will only send them to sleep. If the historical romance can do nothing but mislead, the historical ditch-water will only disgust.'

'And who ever united all these four qualifications?' said the tutor.

'Why, Gibbon did, or very nearly, and that is his supreme merit. He was as learned as Mommsen, and as accurate as Freeman; he had something of the philosophy of Hume, and almost as much critical judgment as Robertson; and he was nearly as great an artist as Herodotus or Livy. Mommsen's *Rome* might be put beside Gibbon's for its learning, insight, judgment, and concentration had he only a spark of Gibbon's fire and art. But as a German, how could we expect it from him? Henri Martin's *France* might be named with Gibbon's *Rome* if the worthy Frenchman had been equal to six volumes instead of sixteen. Grote's *Greece* is a fine book, but, like Freeman, he is overwhelmed in the volume of his own *minutiae* and his extravagant passion for his Chosen People.'

'And is that the whole of the list you could make of the really good histories?' asked the tutor.

'Not at all,' replied the lawyer; 'there are plenty of good books—but I should hardly call any of them great

by the side of Gibbon. There is Milman's *Latin Christianity*, and Curtius and Duncker, Thirlwall's *Greece*, Merivale's *Rome*, Michelet's *France*, Finlay's *Greece*, Carlyle's *Cromwell*, and Ranke's *Popes*, Duruy's *Rome*, Green's *Short History*, and a dozen more, not to weary you with a catalogue. But they all, no doubt, have their limitations. Some are not adequately critical; some fall short in real study; some are more or less perverse; and some are indifferent artists.

'Not one of them can be put beside the *Norman Conquest* for profound research,' cried Wessex.

'Nor beside Froude for beauty of style,' cried Phil.

'Well, I admire both, as I tell you,' said Jack, 'but I doubt if the method of either is destined to give us much more in the future. The vast accumulation of historical material is an excellent and essential thing. But to deluge the world with mere extracts and translations of these undigested documents, as the host of Freemanikins threaten to do, is a dismal outlook. If the history of the world is to be written on that scale, the British Museum will not contain the books that shall be written. And no human intellect could master or use them when they were written. On the other hand, the pictorial method is constantly seducing its votaries into inaccurate, garbled, and over-coloured pictures. We want more concentration, greater breadth, a higher philosophy.'

'You speak as if history were played out,' said the Bede.

'It has to be put upon a new footing, I firmly believe,' said the politician. 'History is only one department of Sociology, just as Natural History is the descriptive part of Biology. And History will have to be brought, most strictly under the guidance and inspiration of

**Social Philosophy.** The day of the chronicler is past; the day of the litterateur is past. The field of knowledge is too vast for the whole of the facts to be set forth, or a tenth of them. To confine ourselves to "periods" is to destroy our sense of unity and proportion, and to weaken our brain by ceasing to regard history as the handmaid and instrument of Social Philosophy. Excerpts from ten thousand chronicles are useful as dictionaries and collections, but they are a mere nuisance as continuous histories. It may be that Gibbon's masterpiece is destined to be the last example of that rarest of combinations—profound scholarship with splendid art. Since his age there has grown up a sense of the unity of human evolution and a solid philosophy of society. The histories of the future will, no doubt, fill up and complete, illustrate, and correct, that general plan of the biography of humanity. They will follow, more likely, the method of Mommsen in his *Roman Provinces*, or Bishop Stubbs's *Constitutional History*—the fine old way of Heeren, Hallam, Guizot; they group movements and forces, rather than narrate events. They will no longer chronicle small beer or paint melodramatic scenes. They will illustrate philosophy.

'Well, good-bye, Wessex,' said Jack; 'I hope that next time we meet, you will have got on to the Norman Kings—they were worth a score of Ecgberhts—and I hope my young friend here will one day write another prize essay fit to compare with the *Holy Roman Empire*. I must be off: the Magdalen bells have begun.'

## CHAPTER V

### A SURVEY OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY<sup>1</sup>

HE who would understand the Middle Ages must make a special study of the thirteenth century—one of the landmarks between the ancient and the modern world, one of the most pregnant, most organic, most memorable, in the annals of mankind. It is an epoch (perhaps the last of the centuries of which this can be said) crowded with names illustrious in action, in thought, in art, in religion equally; which is big with those problems, intellectual, social, political, and spiritual that six succeeding centuries have in vain toiled to solve.

A 'Century' is, of course, a purely arbitrary limit of time. But for practical purposes we can only reckon by years and groups of years. And, as in the biography of a man, we speak of the happy years of a life, or a decade of great activity, so it is convenient to speak of a brilliant 'century,' if we attach no mysterious value to our artificial measure of time. It happens, however, that the thirteenth century not only has a really distinctive character of its own, but that, near to its beginning and to its close, very typical events occurred. In 1198 took place the election of Innocent III, the most successful, perhaps the most truly representative name, of all the mediæval popes. In the year preceding (1197) we may see the Empire visibly beginning to

<sup>1</sup> *Fortnightly Review*, vol. I., N.S. September 1891.

change its spirit with the death of Henry VI., the ferocious son of Barbarossa. In the year following (1199) died Richard Lion-heart, the last of the Anglo-French sovereigns, and, we may say, the last of the genuine Crusader kings, to be succeeded by his brother John, who was happily forced to become an English king, and to found the Constitution of England by signing the Great Charter.

And at the end of the century, its last year (1300) is the date of the ominous 'Jubilee' of the Papacy—the year in which Dante places his great poem—a year which is one of the most convenient points in the *memoria technica* of modern history. Three years later died Boniface VIII., after the tremendous humiliation which marked the manifest decadence of the Papacy; eight years later began the 'Babylonish Captivity,' the seventy years' exile of the Papacy at Avignon; then came the ruin of the Templars throughout Europe, and all the tragedies and convulsions which mark the reigns of Philip the Fair in France, Edward II. in England, and the confusion that overtook the Empire on the death of Henry of Luxembourg, that last hope of imperial ambition. Thus, taking the period between the election of Innocent III., in 1198, and the removal of the Papacy to Avignon, in 1308, we find a very definite character in the thirteenth century. It would, of course, be necessary to fix the view on Europe as a whole, or rather on Latin Christendom, to obtain any unity of conception; and, obviously, the development and decay of the Church must be the central point, for this is at once the most general and the important element in the common life of Christendom.

Within the limits of the thirteenth century, so understood, a series of striking events and great names

is crowded—the growth, culmination, extravagance, and then the humiliation of the Papal See; the eighteen years' rule of Innocent III., the fourteen years of Gregory IX., the twenty-one of Innocent IV.; the short revival of Gregory X.; the ambition, the pride, the degradation, and shame of Boniface VIII. The great experiment to organise Christendom under a single spiritual sovereign had been made by some of the most aspiring natures, and the most consummate politicians who ever wore mitre—had been made and failed. When the popes returned from Avignon to Rome in 1378, after the seventy years of exile from their capital, it was to find the Catholic world rent with schism, a series of anti-popes, heresy, and the seeds of the Reformation in England and in Germany. Thus the secession to Avignon in the opening of the fourteenth century was the beginning of the end of spiritual unity for Latin Christendom.

At the very opening of the thirteenth century, the diversion of the Crusade to the capture of Constantinople in 1204, and all the incidents of that unholily war, prove that, as a moral and spiritual movement, the era of Godfrey and Tancred, of Peter the Hermit and Bernard of Clairvaux was ended; and though, for a century or two, kings took the Cross, like St. Louis and our Edward I., in the thirteenth century, or, like our Henry V., in the fifteenth century, talked of so doing, the hope of annihilating Islam was gone for ever, and Christendom, for four centuries, had enough to do to protect Europe itself from the Moslem. And within a few years of this cynical prostitution of the Crusading enthusiasm in the conquest of Byzantium, the Crusading passion broke out in the dreadful persecution of the Albigenses and the Crusade against heresy of Simon de

Montfort. And hardly was the unity of Christendom assured by blood and terror, when the spiritual Crusades of Francis and Dominic begin, and the contagious zeal of the Mendicant Friars restored the force of the Church, and gave it a new era of moral and social vitality.

Now, whilst the Popes were making their last grand rally to weld Christendom into spiritual unity, in France, in England, in Spain, in North Italy, in South Italy, in Southern Germany, in a minor degree throughout central Europe, princes of great energy were organising the germs of nations, and were founding the institutions of complex civil administration. Monarchy, municipalities, nations, and organised government, national constitutions, codes of law, a central police, and international trade were growing uniformly throughout the entire century. Feudalism, strictly so called, the baron's autocracy, baronial war, and the manor court, were as rapidly dying down. Crushed between the hammer of the kings and the anvil of the burghers, the feudal chivalry suffered, in many a bloody field, a series of shameful overthrows all through the fourteenth century, until it ended in the murderous orgies of the fifteenth century. But it was the thirteenth century that established throughout Europe the two great forces of the future which were to divide the inheritance of feudalism—a civilised and centralised monarchy on the one hand, a rich, industrious, resolute people on the other hand.

It was the thirteenth century, moreover, that saw the great development of the manufacturing and trading cities north of the Alps. Down to the expulsion of the Christians from Palestine, at the close of the twelfth century, there had been few cities in Europe of wealth and importance outside Italy and the South of France.



and of Spain. But the next hundred years founded the greatness of cities like Paris and London, of Troyes, Rouen, Lyons, Bordeaux, Bruges, Ghent, Cologne, Strassburg, Basel, Nuremberg, Brémen, Lubeck, Hamburg, Dantzic, Winchester, Norwich, Exeter, Bristol. The Crusades had brought Europe together, and had brought the West face to face with the East. Manum had ceased to be *ascriptus glebæ*, locally bound to a few clearings on the earth. It had begun to understand the breadth and variety of the planet, and the infinite resources of its products. Industrial exchange on a world-wide scale began again after a long interval of ten centuries.

The latter half of this same century also saw the birth of that characteristic feature of modern society—the control of political power by representative assemblies. For the first time in Europe deputies from the towns take part in the national councils. In Spain this may be traced even before the century begins. Early in the century it is found in Sicily; about the middle of the century we trace it in England and Germany; and finally, in France. As every one knows, it was in 1264 that Simon de Montfort summoned to Parliament knights of each shire, and two representatives from boroughs and cities; and, in 1295, Edward I. called together the first fully-constituted Parliament as now understood in England. The States-General of France, the last and the least memorable of all national Parliaments, were only seven years subsequent to the formal inauguration of the Parliament of England. The introduction of Parliamentary representation would alone suffice to make memorable the thirteenth century.

The same age, too, which was so fertile in new political ideas and in grand spiritual effort, was no less

rich in philosophy, in the germs of science, in reviving the inheritance of ancient learning, in the scientific study of law, in the foundation of the great Northern universities, in the magnificent expansion of the architecture we call Gothic, in the beginnings of painting and of sculpture, in the foundation of modern literature, both in prose and verse, in the fullest development of the Troubadours, the Romance poets, the lays, sonnets, satires, and tales of Italy, Provence, and Flanders; and finally, in that stupendous poem, which we universally accept as the greatest of modern epical works, wherein the most splendid genius of the Middle Ages seemed to chant its last majestic requiem, which he himself, as I have said, emphatically dated in the year 1300. Truly, if we must use arbitrary numbers to help our memory, that year—1300—may be taken as the resplendent sunset of an epoch which had extended in one form back for nearly one thousand years to the fall of the Roman Empire, and equally as the broken and stormy dawn of an epoch which has for six hundred years since been passing through an amazing phantasmagoria of change.

Now this great century, the last of the true Middle Ages, which, as it drew to its own end, gave birth to Modern Society, has a special character of its own, a character that gives to it an abiding and enchanting interest. We find in it a harmony of power, a universality of endowment, a glow, an aspiring ambition and confidence, such as we never again find in later centuries, at least so generally and so permanently diffused. At the opening of the thirteenth century, Christendom, as a whole, rested united in profound belief in one religious faith. There had appeared in the age preceding teachers of new doctrines, like Abailard, Gilbert de la Porée,

Arnold of Brescia, and others; but their new ideas had not at all penetrated to the body of the people. As a whole, Christendom had still, as the century began, an unquestioned and unquestionable creed, without schism, heresy, doubts, or sects. And this creed still sufficed to inspire the most profound thought, the most lofty poetry, the widest culture, the freest art of the age: it filled statesmen with awe, scholars with enthusiasm, and consolidated society around uniform objects of reverence and worship. It bound men together, from the Hebrides to the Eastern Mediterranean, from the Atlantic to the Baltic, as European men have never since been bound. Great thinkers, like Albert of Cologne and Aquinas, found it to be the stimulus of their meditations. Mighty poets, like Dante, could not conceive poetry, unless based on it and saturated with it. Creative artists, like Giotto, found it an ever living well-spring of pure beauty. The great cathedrals embodied it in a thousand forms of glory and power. To statesman, artist, poet, thinker, teacher, soldier, worker, chief, or follower, it supplied at once inspiration and instrument.

This unity of creed had existed, it is true, for five or six centuries in large parts of Europe, and, indeed, in a shape even more uniform and intense. But not till the thirteenth century did it co-exist with such acute intellectual energy, with such philosophic power, with such a free and superb art, with such sublime poetry, with so much industry, culture, wealth, and so rich a development of civic organisation. This thirteenth century was the last in the history of mankind in Europe when a high and complex civilisation has been saturated with a uniform and unquestioned creed. As we all know, since then, civilisation has had to advance with ever-increasing multiplicity of creeds. What impresses

as the keynote of that century is the *harmony* of power it displays. As in the Augustan age, or the Periclean age, or the Homeric age, indeed, far more than in any of them, men might fairly dream, in the age of Innocent and St. Louis, that they had reached a normal state, when human life might hope to see an ultimate symmetry of existence. There have been since epochs of singular intellectual expansion, of creative art, of material progress, of moral earnestness, of practical energy. Our nineteenth century has very much of all of these in varying proportions. But we have long ceased to expect that they will not clash with each other; we have abandoned hope of ever seeing them work in organic harmony together.

Now the thirteenth century was an era of no one special character. It was in nothing one-sided, and in nothing discordant. It had great thinkers, great rulers, great teachers, great poets, great artists, great moralists, and great workers. It could not be called the material age, the devotional age, the political age, or the poetic age, in any special degree. It was equally poetic, political, industrial, artistic, practical, intellectual, and devotional. And these qualities acted in harmony on a uniform conception of life, with a real symmetry of purpose. There was one common creed, one ritual, one worship, one sacred language, one Church, a single code of manners, a uniform scheme of society, a common system of education, an accepted type of beauty, a universal art, something like a recognised standard of the Good, the Beautiful, and the True. One half of the world was not occupied in ridiculing or combating what the other half was doing. Nor were men absorbed in ideals of their own, whilst treating the ideals of their neighbours as matters of indifference and waste of power.

Men as utterly different from each other as were Stephen Langton, St. Francis, Thomas Aquinas, Roger Bacon, Dante, Giotto, St. Louis, Edward I.—all profoundly accepted one common order of ideas, equally applying to things of the intellect, of moral duty, of action, and of the soul—to public and private life at once—and they could all feel that they were together working out the same task. It may be doubted if that has ever happened in Europe since.

To point out the peculiar character of an age is not to praise it without reserve: much less to ask men to return to it now. No one can now be suspected of sighing for the time of Innocent III., of St. Francis and St. Louis; nor do reasonable historians deny that their simple beliefs and ideas are frankly incompatible with all that to-day we call freedom, science, and progress. Let us be neither reactionary, nor obscurantist, neither Catholic nor absolutist in sympathy, but seek only to understand an age in its own spirit, and from the field of its own ideas. Nor need we forget how the uniform creed of Christendom was shaken, even in the thirteenth century, by fierce spasms which ended too often in blood and horror. Their social system certainly was not without struggle; for the thirteenth century was no golden era, nor did the lion lie down with the lamb or consent to be led by a little child. We cannot forget either Albigenian War or Runcynede, nor our Barons' War, nor Guelphs and Ghibellines, nor the history of Frederick II., Manfred, and Conradino, nor the fall of Boniface, nor the Sicilian Vespers. And yet we may confidently maintain that there was a real coherence of belief, sentiment, manners, and life in the thirteenth century.

Perhaps we ought rather to say, in its earlier generations and for the great mass of its people and doings,

For we may see the seed of divergences, heresies, insurrections, civil war, anarchy, discord, doubt, and rebellion in Church, State, society, and habits, gathering up in the thirteenth century, and especially definite in its stormy and ominous close. In Roger Bacon, even in Aquinas, nay, in Dante, there lie all the germs of the intellectual dilemmas which shook Catholicism to its foundations. Francis and Dominic, if they gave the Church a magnificent rally, saved her by remedies which a cool judgment must pronounce to be suicidal. Our Edward I., in the thirteenth century, had to deal with the same rebellious forces which made the reign of our Henry VI., in the fifteenth century, a record of blood and anarchy. Boniface, Philip the Fair, even Edward I., did violent things in the thirteenth century, which Churchmen and princes after them hardly exceeded. And there are profanities and ribaldries in the thirteenth-century poetry which Rabelais, Voltaire, and Diderot have not surpassed. But in judging an epoch one has to weigh how far those things were common and characteristic of it, how far they deeply and widely affected it. Judged by these tests, we must say that scepticism, anarchy, ribaldry, and hypocrisy, however latent in the thirteenth century, had not yet eaten out its soul.

It may surprise some readers to treat the thirteenth century as the virtual close of the Middle Ages, an epoch which is usually placed in the latter half of the fifteenth century, in the age of Louis XI., Henry VII., and Ferdinand of Arragon. But the true spirit of Feudalism, the living soul of Catholicism, which together make up the compound type of society we call mediæval, were, in point of fact, waning all through the thirteenth century. The hurly-burly of the fourteenth

and the first half of the fifteenth centuries was merely one long and cruel death agony. Nay, the inner soul of Catholic Feudalism quite ended in the first generation of the thirteenth century—with St. Dominic, St. Francis, Innocent III., Philip Augustus, and Otto IV., Stephen Langton, and William, Earl Mareschal. The truly characteristic period of mediævalism is in the twelfth, rather than the thirteenth, century, the period covered by the first three Crusades from 1094, the date of the Council of Clermont, to 1192, when Cœur-de-Lion withdrew from the Holy Land. Or, if we put it a little wider in limits, we may date true mediævalism from the rise of Hildebrand about 1070 to the death of Innocent III. in 1216, or just about a century and a half. St. Louis himself, as we read Joinville's *Memoirs*, seems to us a man belated, born too late, and almost an anachronism in the second half of the thirteenth century:

We know that in the slow evolution of society the social brilliancy of a movement is seldom visible, and is almost never ripe for poetic and artistic idealisation until the energy of the movement itself is waning, or even it may be, is demonstrably spent. Shakespeare prolonged the Renaissance of the fifteenth century, the Renaissance of Leonardo and Raphael, into the seventeenth century, when Puritanism was in full career; and Shakespeare—it is deeply significant—died on the day when Oliver Cromwell entered college at Cambridge. And so, when Dante, in his *Vision* of 1300, saw the heights and the depths of Catholic Feudalism, he was looking back over great movements which were mighty forces a hundred years earlier. Just so, though the thirteenth century contained within its bosom the plainest proofs that the mediæval world was ending, the

flower, the brilliancy, the variety, the poetry, the soul of the mediæval world were never seen in so rich a glow as in the thirteenth century, its last great effort.

In a brief review of each of the dominant movements which give so profound a character to the thirteenth century as a whole, one begins naturally with the central movement of all—the Church. The thirteenth century was the era of the culmination, the over-straining, and then the shameful defeat of the claim made by the Church of Rome to a moral and spiritual autocracy in Christendom. There are at least five Popes in that one hundred years—Innocent III., Gregory IX., Innocent IV., Gregory X., and Boniface VIII.—whose characters impress us with a sense of power or of astounding desire of power, whose lives are romances and dreams, and whose careers are amongst the most instructive in history. He who would understand the Middle Ages must study from beginning to end the long and crowded Pontificate of Innocent III. In genius, in commanding nature, in intensity of character, in universal energy, in aspiring designs, Innocent III. has few rivals in the fourteen centuries of the Roman Pontiffs, and few superiors in any age on any throne in the world. His eighteen years of rule, from 1198 to 1216, were one long effort, for the moment successful, and in part deserving success, to enforce on the kings and peoples of Europe a higher morality, respect for the spiritual mission of the Church, and a sense of their common civilisation. We feel that he is truly a great man with a noble cause, when the Pope forces Philip Augustus to take back the wife he had so insolently cast off, when the Pope forces John to respect the rights of all his subjects, laymen or churchmen, when the Pope gives to England the best of her Primates, Stephen



Langton, the principal author of our Great Charter, when the Pope accepts the potent enthusiasm of the New Friars and sends them forth on their mission of revivalism.

It is not necessary to enter on one of the most difficult problems in history to decide how far the development and organisation of the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages were worth the price that civilisation paid in moral, intellectual, and in material loss. Still less can we attempt to justify such Crusades as that which established the Latin kingdom in Constantinople, or the Crusade to crush the revolt of the Albigenian heretics, and all the enormous assumptions of Innocent in things temporal and things spiritual. But before we decide that in the thirteenth century civilisation would have been the gainer, if there had been no central Church at all, let us count up all the great brains of the time, with Aquinas and Dante at their head, all the great statesmen, St. Louis, Blanche of Castile, in France; Simon de Montfort and Edward I., in England, and Ferdinand III., in Spain; Frederic II. and Rudolph of Hapsburg, in the Empire,—who might in affairs of state often oppose Churchmen, but who felt that society itself reposed on a well-ordered Church.

If the great attempt failed in the hands of Innocent III., surely one of the finest brains and noblest natures that Rome ever sent forth—and fail it did on the whole, except as a temporary expedient—it could not succeed with smaller men, when every generation made the conditions of success more hopeless. The superhuman pride of Gregory IX., the venerable pontiff who for fourteen years defied the whole strength of the Emperor Frederick II., seems to us to-day, in spite of his lofty spirit, but to parody that of Hildebrand, of Alexander

III., and Innocent III. And when we come to Innocent IV. (1243-1264), the disturber of the peace of the Empire, he is almost a forecast of Boniface VIII. And Boniface himself (1294-1303), though his words were more haughty than those of the mightiest of his predecessors, though insatiable ambition and audacious intrigue gave him some moments of triumph, ended after nine years of desperate struggle in what the poet calls 'the mockery, the vinegar, the gall of a new crucifixion of the Vicar of Christ.' Read Dante, and see all that a great spirit in the Middle Ages could still hope from the Church and its chiefs—all that made such dreams a mockery and a delusion.

When Dante wrote, the Popes were already settled at Avignon and the Church had entered upon one of its worst eras. And as we follow his scathing indignation, in the nineteenth canto of the *Inferno*, or in the twenty-seventh of the *Paradiso*, we feel how utterly the vision of Peter had failed to be realised on earth. But for one hundred years before, all through the thirteenth century, the writing on the wall may now be read, in letters of fire. When Saladin forced the allied kings of Europe to abandon the conquest of the Holy Sepulchre, and Lion-hearted Richard turned back in despair (1192), the Crusades, as military movements, ended. The later Crusades of the thirteenth century were splendid acts of folly, of anachronism, even crime. They were 'magnificent, but not war'—in any rational sense. It was Europe that had to be protected against the Moslem—not Asia or Africa that was to be conquered. All through the thirteenth century European civilisation was enjoying the vast material and intellectual results of the Crusades of the twelfth century. But to sail for Jerusalem, Egypt, or Tunis, had then become, as the

wise Joinville told St. Louis, a cruel neglect of duty at home.

It was not merely in the exhaustion of the Crusading zeal that the waning of the Catholic fervour was shown. In the twelfth century there had been learned or ingenious heretics. But the mark of the thirteenth century is the rise of heretic sects, schismatic churches, religious reformations, spreading deep down amongst the roots of the people. We have the three distinct religious movements which began to sap the orthodox citadel, and which afterwards took such vast proportions—Puritanism, Mysticism, Scepticism. All of them take form in the thirteenth century—Waldenses, Albigenses, Petrobussians, Poor Men, Anti-Ritualists, Anti-Sacerdotalists, Manichæans, Gospel Christians, Quietists, Flagellants, Pastoureaux, fanatics of all orders. All through the thirteenth century we have an intense ferment of the religious exaltation, culminating in the orthodox mysticism, the rivalries, the missions, the revivalism, of the new allies of the Church, the Franciscans and Dominicans, the Friars, or Mendicant Orders.

The thirteenth century saw the romantic rise, the marvellous growth, and then the inevitable decay of the Friars, the two orders whose careers form one of the most fascinating and impressive stories in modern history. The Franciscans, or Grey Friars, founded in 1212, the Dominicans, or Black Friars, founded in 1216, by the middle of the century had infused new life throughout the Catholic world. By the end of the century their power was spent, and they had begun to be absorbed in the general life of the Church. It was one of the great rallies of the Papal Church, perhaps of all the rallies the most important, certainly the most brilliant, most pathetic, most fascinating, the most rich

in poetry, in art, in devotion. For the mediæval Church of Rome, like the Empire of the Cæsars at Rome, like the Eastern Empire of Constantinople, like the Empire of the Khalifs, which succeeded that, seems to subsist for centuries after its epoch of zenith by a long series of rallies, revivals, and new births out of almost hopeless disorganisation and decay.

But the thirteenth century is not less memorable for its political than for its spiritual history. And in this field the history is that of new organisations, not the dissolution of the old. The thirteenth century gave Europe the nations as we now know them. France, England, Spain, large parts of North and South Germany, became nations, where they were previously counties, duchies, and fiefs. Compare the map of Europe at the end of the twelfth century, when Philip Augustus was struggling with Richard I., when the King of England was a more powerful ruler in France than the so-called King of France in Paris, when Spain was held by various groups of petty kinglets facing the solid power of the Moors, compare this with the map of Europe at the end of the thirteenth century, with Spain constituted a kingdom under Ferdinand III. and Alfonso X., France under Philip the Fair, and England under Edward I.

\* At the very opening of the thirteenth century John did England the inestimable service of losing her French possessions. At the close of the century the greatest of the Plantagenets finally annexed Wales to England and began the incorporation of Scotland and Ireland. Of the creators of England as a sovereign power in the world, from Alfred to Chatham, between the names of the Conqueror and Cromwell, assuredly that of Edward I. is the most important. As to France, the petty

counties which Philip Augustus inherited in 1180 had become, in the days of Philip the Fair (1286-1314), the most powerful nation in Europe. As a great European force, the French nation dates from the age of Philip Augustus, Blanche, of Castile, her son Louis IX. (the Saint), and the two Philips (III. and IV.), the son and grandson of St. Louis. The monarchy of France was indeed created in the thirteenth century. All that went before was preparation: all that came afterwards was development. Almost as much may be said for England and for Spain.

It was an age of great rulers. Indeed, we may doubt if any hundred years of European history has been so crowded with great statesmen and kings. In England, Stephen Langton and the authors of our Great Charter in 1215; William, Earl Mareschal, Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, and above all Edward I., great as soldier, as ruler, as legislator—as great when he yielded as when he compelled. In France, Philip Augustus, a king curiously like our Edward I. in his virtues as in his faults, though earlier by three generations; Blanche, his son's wife, Regent of France; St. Louis, her son; and St. Louis' grandson, the terrible, fierce, subtle, and adroit Philip the Fair. Then on the throne of the Empire, from 1220 to 1250, Frederick II., 'the world's wonder,' one of the most brilliant characters of the Middle Ages, whose life is a long romance, whose many-sided endowments seemed to promise everything but real greatness and abiding results. Next, after a generation, his successor, less brilliant but far more truly great, Rudolph of Hapsburg, emperor from 1273 to 1291, the founder of the Austrian dynasty, the ancestor of its sovereigns, the parallel, I had almost said the equal, of our own Edward I. In Spain, Ferdinand III. and his

son, Alfonso X., whose reigns united gave Spain peace and prosperity for fifty-four years (1230-1284).

How comes it that in this epoch lands so different as Italy, Spain, France, England, and Germany, produce rulers who, in all essentials as statesmen, are so closely parallel in act, whilst widely different in character? Frederick II., in nature, seems the antithesis of St. Louis, so does Philip Augustus of Ferdinand III., our cultured Edward I. of his martial contemporary, Rudolph of Hapsburg. Yet these men, differing so entirely in nature and in gifts, ruling men so different as those of Sicily and Austria, Castile and England, all exercise the same functions in the same way: all are great generals, administrators, legislators, statesmen, founders of nations, authors of constitutions, supporters of the Church, promoters of learning. Clearly it is that their time is the golden age of kings, an age when the social conditions forced forth all the manhood and the genius of the born ruler; when the ruled were by habit, religion, and by necessity eager to welcome the great king and cheerfully helped him in his task. Of them all, St. Louis is certainly the most beautiful nature, Frederick II. the most interesting personality, our Simon de Montfort the most genuine patriot, our own Edward I. the most creative mind, and he and Philip Augustus the kings whose work was the most pregnant with permanent results; but we may find in a much ruder nature, in Rudolph of Hapsburg, the simple, unwearied, warrior chief, who finally turned the German kings from Italy to the North, who never quarrelled with the Church, who so sternly asserted the arm of law, and whose whole life was an unbroken series of well-won triumphs—the most truly typical king of the thirteenth century. Frederick II. and Edward I. are really in advance of their age;

and St. Louis and Ferdinand III are saints and churchmen more than kings.

Together with the kings must be kept always in view the base on which the power of the kings was founded—the growing greatness of the towns. There were two allied forces which divided the inheritance of Feudalism—the monarchs on the one hand, the burghers on the other. The thirteenth century is eminently the era of the foundation of the great towns north of the Alps. In France, in Spain, in England, in Burgundy, in Flanders, and even we may say in Germany, the princes never became strong but by alliance with the wealth, the intelligence, the energy, of the cities. To the burghers the kings represented civilisation, internal peace, good government: to the kings the towns represented the sinews of war, the material and intellectual sources of their splendour, of their armies, their civil organisation. Hence, in the thirteenth century, there grew in greatness, side by side and in friendly alliance, the two powers which, in later centuries, have fought out such obstinate battles—the monarchies and the people. And out of this alliance, at once its condition and its instrument, there grew up Cortes, Diets, States-General, Parliaments, Charters, constitutional laws, codes, and ordinances.

It is true that in Italy, Spain, Provence, and Languedoc, we find rich trading towns as early as the First Crusade, but it was not until the thirteenth century that we can call any northern city an independent power, with a large, wealthy, and proud population, a municipal life of its own, and a widely extended commerce. By the end of the thirteenth century Europe is covered with such towns—Paris, London, Strassburg, Cologne, Ghent, Rouen, Bordeaux, in the first line, the great wool cities of East England, the ports of the South and

West, the great river cities of France along the Loire, the Rhone, the Garonne, the Seine, the rich, artistic, laborious, and crowded cities of Flanders, the rich and powerful cities on the Rhine from Basle down to Arnheim, the cities of the Danube, the Elbe, and the Baltic. This is the age of the great confederation of the Rhine, and the rise of the Hanseatic League ; for in Germany and in Flanders, where the towns could not count on the protection of a friendly and central monarchy, the towns formed mutual leagues for protection and support amongst themselves. It would need a volume to work out this complex development. But we may take it that, for Northern Europe, the thirteenth century is the era of the definite establishment of rich, free, self-governing municipalities. It is the flourishing era of town charters, of city leagues, and of the systematic establishment of a European commerce, north of the Mediterranean, both inter-provincial and inter-national. And out of these rich and teeming cities arose that social power destined to such a striking career in the next six centuries—the middle class, a new order in the State, whose importance rests on wealth, intelligence, and organisation, not on birth or on arms. And out of that middle class rose popular representation, election by the commons, *i.e.*, by communes, or corporate constituencies, the third estate. The history of popular representation in Europe would occupy a volume, or many volumes : its conception, birth, and youth, fall within the thirteenth century.

The Great Charter, which the barons, as real representatives of the whole nation, wrested from John in 1215, did not, it is true, contain any scheme of popular representation ; but it asserted the principle, and it laid down canons of public law which led directly to popular



representation and a parliamentary constitution. The Great Charter has been talked about for many centuries in vague superlatives of praise, by those who had little precise or accurate knowledge of it. But now that our knowledge of it is full and exact, we see that its importance was in no way exaggerated, and perhaps was hardly understood; and we find it hard adequately to express our admiration of its wise, just, and momentous policy. The Great Charter of 1215 led in a direct line to the complete and developed Parliament of 1295. And Bishop Stubbs has well named the interval between the two, the eighty years of struggle for a political constitution. The Charter of John contains the principle of taxation through the common council of the realm. From the very first year after it representative councils appear; first from counties; then, in 1254, we have a regular Parliament from shires; in 1264, after the battle of Lewes, Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, summoned two discreet representatives from towns and cities by writ, in 1273, Edward I. summoned what was in effect a Parliament; and, after several Parliaments summoned in intervening years, we have the first complete and finally constituted Parliament in 1295.

But our own, the greatest and most permanent of Parliaments, was by no means the earliest. Representatives of cities and boroughs had come to the Cortes of Castile and of Arragon in the twelfth century; early in the thirteenth century Frederick II. summoned them to general courts in Sicily; in the middle of the century the towns sent deputies to the German Diets; in 1277, the commons and towns swear fealty to Rudolph of Hapsburg; in 1291 was founded in the mountains of Schwytz that Swiss confederation which has just celebrated its 600th anniversary; and, in 1302, Philip the

Fair summoned the States-General to back him in his desperate duel with Boniface VIII. Thus, seven years after Edward I. had called to Westminster that first true Parliament which has had there so great a history over 600 years, Philip called together to Notre Dame at Paris the three estates—the clergy, the baronage, and the commons. So clear is it that the thirteenth century called into being that momentous element of modern civilisation, the representation of the people in Parliament.

Side by side with Parliaments there grew up the power of the law courts: along with constitutions, civil jurisprudence. Our Edward I. is often called, and called truly, the English Justinian. The authority of the decisions of the courts, the development of law by direct legislation—i.e., case-law as we know it, legislative amendment of the law as we know it—first begin with the reign of Edward I. From that date to this hour we have an unbroken sequence of development in our judicial, as much as in our parliamentary, history. An even more momentous transformation of law took place throughout France. There the kings created the powerful order of the jurists, and ruled at home and abroad through them. In the legislation of Philip Augustus, the translation under him of the *Corpus Juris* into French, the famous *Etablissements* of St. Louis, at the middle of the century, the growing importance of the *Parlements*, or judicial councils, under Philip the Fair at the end of the century, we have the first resurrection of the Roman civil law to fight out its long contest with the feudal law, which has led to its ultimate supremacy in the *Civil Code* of our day.

These, however, are but the external facts forming the framework within which the moral and intellectual

ferment of the thirteenth century moved and worked ; and in grouping in a few paragraphs the well-known outlines of the political events of that age we are merely tracing the skeleton of the living forces of the time. In many ways the thirteenth century created by anticipation much of the Renaissance that we associate with the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It was a revival or new era, deeper, purer, more constructive than the latter movement, which we commonly speak of as *Renaissance*. This superfluous Gallicism is a term which we should do well to drop ; for it suggests a national character to a European movement ; it implies a new birth, in the spirit of mendacious vanity, so characteristic of the age of Cellinis and Aretinos ; and it expresses the negative side of what was largely a mere evolution of the past. As a creative movement, the profound uprising of intellect and soul concentrated in Dante was a far nobler and more potent effort than any form of classical revival. The movement we associate with the epoch of Leo X., of Francis I., and Charles V. was only one of the series of European efforts to realise a more complete type of moral and social life ; and of them all it was the one most deeply tainted with the spirit of vanity, of impurity, and of anarchy. Of all the epochs of effort after a new life, that of the age of Aquinas, Roger Bacon, St. Francis, St. Louis, Giotto, and Dante is the most purely spiritual, the most really constructive, and indeed the most truly philosophic.

Between the epoch of Charlemagne and the revolutionary reconstruction of the present century we may count at least four marked periods of concerted effort in Western Europe to found a broader and higher type of society. European civilisation advances, no doubt, in a way which is most irregular, and yet in the long run

continuous. But we may still trace very distinct periods of special activity and common upheaval. One of these periods is the age of Hildebrand, the great Norman chiefs, Innocent, Anselm, and the first Crusade. The second period is that which opens with Innocent III. and closes with Dante. The third is the classical revival from Louis XI. to Charles V. The fourth is the philosophic and scientific movement of the age of Voltaire, Diderot, and Hume, which preceded the great revolutionary wars. The first two movements, in the golden age of Popes and Crusades, were sincere attempts to reform society on a Catholic and Feudal basis. They did not succeed, but they were both inspired with great and beautiful ideals. And the movement of the thirteenth century was more humane, more intellectual, more artistic, more original, and more poetic than that of the eleventh century. The so-called *Renaissance*, or Humanistic Revival, was a time of extraordinary brilliancy and energy; but it was avowedly based on insurrection and destruction, and it was an utterly premature attempt to found an intellectual humanism without either real humanity or sound scientific knowledge. And the age of Voltaire, though it had both humanity and science, was even more destructive in its aim; for it erected negation into its own creed, and proposed to regenerate mankind by 'stamping out the infamy' (of religion).

It follows then that, if we are to select any special period for the birth of a regenerate and developed modern society, we may take the age of Dante, 1265-1321, as that which witnessed the mighty transformation from a world which still trusted in the faith of a Catholic and Feudal constitution of society to a world which was teeming with ideas and wants incompatible with Catholic or Feudal systems altogether. The whole

thirteenth century was crowded with creative forces in philosophy, art, poetry, and statesmanship as rich as those of the Humanist *Renaissance*. And if we are accustomed to look on them as so much more limited and rude, it is because we forget how very few and poor were their resources and their instruments. In creative genius, Giotto is the peer, if not the superior, of Raphael. Dante had all the qualities of his three chief successors—and very much more besides. It is a tenable view that, in pure inventive fertility and in imaginative range, those vast composite creations—the cathedrals of the thirteenth century—in all their wealth of architecture, statuary, painted glass, enamels, embroideries, and inexhaustible decorative work, may be set beside the entire painting of the sixteenth century. Albert and Aquinas, in philosophic range, had no peer until we come down to Descartes. Nor was Roger Bacon surpassed in versatile audacity of genius and in true encyclopædic grasp by any thinker between him and his namesake, the Chancellor. In statesmanship, and all the qualities of the born leader of men, we can only match the great chiefs of the thirteenth century by comparing them with the greatest names three or even four centuries later.

The thirteenth century was indeed an abortive revival. It was a failure; but a splendid failure. Men as great as any the world has known in thought, in art, in action, profoundly believed that society could be permanently organised on Catholic and Feudal lines. It was an illusion; but it was neither an unworthy nor an excusable illusion; for there were great resources, both in Catholic and in Feudal powers. And it was not possible for the greatest minds, after the thousand years of interval which had covered Europe since the age of the Antonines, to understand how vast were the defects of

their own age in knowledge, in the arts of life, and in social organisation. They had no ancient world, or what we call to-day, the Revival of Learning; they had no real science; and even the ordinary commonplaces of every Greek and Roman were to them a profound mystery. What was even worse, they did not know how much they needed to know: they had no measure of their own ignorance. And thus even intellects like those of Albert, Aquinas, and Dante could still dream of a final co-ordination of human knowledge on the lines of some subjective recasting of the Catholic verities. And they naturally imagined that, after all, society could be saved by some regeneration of the Church—though we now see that this was far less possible than to expect Pope Boniface eventually to turn out a saint, like Bernard of Clairvaux or Francis of Assisi.

And just as the men of intellect still believed that it was possible to recast the Catholic scheme, so men of action still believed it possible to govern nations on the Feudal scheme, and with the help of the feudal magnates. For a time, all through the thirteenth century, men of very noble character or of commanding genius did manage to govern in this way, by the help first of the churchmen, then of the growing townships, and by constantly exhausting their own barons in foreign expeditions. Philip Augustus, Blanche, St. Louis, and Philip the Fair, held their own by a combination of high qualities and fortunate conditions. In England the infamous John and his foolish son forced the feudal chiefs to become statesmen themselves. Edward I., Rudolph of Hapsburg, Albert of Austria, Henry of Luxemburg, succeeded in marshalling their fierce baronial squadrons. But it could only be done by

extraordinary skill and fortune, and even then but for a short time. After them, for nearly two hundred years, Europe was delivered over to an orgie of feudal anarchy. The dreadful Hundred Years' War between France and England, the wars of succession, the Wars of the Roses, the dismemberment of France, the confusion of Spain, the decadence of the Empire ensued.

Thus the political history of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is a record of bloodshed and anarchy; until men like the grim Louis XI., Ferdinand V. and Charles V., and the Tudors in England, finally succeeded in mastering Feudalism by the aid of the middle classes and middle-class statesmen. But, as neither middle class nor middle-class statesmen existed in the thirteenth century, the kings were forced to do the best they could with their feudal resources. What they did was often very good, and sometimes truly wonderful. It could not permanently succeed; but its very failure was a grand experiment. And thus, whether in the spiritual and intellectual world, or in the political and social world, the thirteenth century—the last great effort of the Middle Ages—was doomed to inevitable disappointment, because the preceding thousand years of history had deprived it of the only means by which success was possible.

The unmistakable sign that the real force of Catholicism was exhausted may be read in the transfer of the intellectual leadership from the monasteries to the schools, from the churchmen to the doctors. And this transfer was thoroughly effected in the thirteenth century. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries the spiritual and philosophic guidance of mankind was in the hands of true monks. Clugny, Clairvaux, St. Denis, Bec, Canterbury, Merton, Malmesbury, Glastonbury, and

Croyland, sent out teachers and rulers. St. Bernard managed to silence Abailard. But in the thirteenth century it is not the monasteries but the universities that hold up the torch. Paris, Oxford, Montpellier, and the like, were wholly secular schools; for, though the leading doctors and professors of this age are still nominally churchmen, and even monks, their whole moral and mental attitude, and the atmosphere of their schools, are strictly secular, and not monastic. Within two generations the Dominican and Franciscan houses, founded at the beginning of the century in such a whirlwind of ecstatic devotion, became celebrated schools of learning and secular education, so that Aquinas has almost as little of the missionary passion of St. Dominic as Roger Bacon has of the mystic tenderness of St. Francis. It is a fact of deep significance that, within a generation of the foundation of the Mendicant Orders, the Descartes and the Bacon of the thirteenth century were both on the roll of the Friars. So rapidly did mystic theology tend to develop into free inquiry. It would be hard to find anything more utterly unlike the saintly ideal of monasticism than were Paris and Oxford at the end of the thirteenth century. Its whole intellectual character may be measured by the light of these two famous seminaries of the new thought.

It was the great age of the schools we call universities, for though those of Italy belong to an earlier age, the thirteenth century gave full stature to the universities of Paris, and of Oxford, of Orleans, Toulouse, and Montpellier, of Cordova, Seville, and Toledo. That of Paris received from Philip Augustus in 1215 (the year of our Great Charter) her formal constitution, and all through the thirteenth century her 'nations' of twenty thousand students formed the main intellectual centre



of Europe. The University of Oxford was hardly second to that of Paris; and though the history of the Oxford schools is in its origin obscure, and even local, in the thirteenth century we can trace the definite constitution of the university and the momentous foundation of the colleges, when Walter de Merton, in the reign of Edward I., gave statutes to Merton College. Thus the origin of our great English university is almost exactly coeval with the origin of our English Parliament.

The same age also witnessed the revival of rational philosophy after its long sleep of a thousand years. Intellects quite as powerful as those of the Greek thinkers took up the task of constructing a harmony of general ideas on the ground where it had been left by the Alexandrine successors of Aristotle and Plato. The best teachers of the thirteenth century had conceptions and aims very far broader and more real than those of Abailard, of William of Champeaux, or John of Salisbury in the twelfth century, who were little more than theological logicians. The thirteenth century had an instrument of its own, at least as important to human progress as the classical revival of the fifteenth century. This was the recovery in substance of the works of Aristotle. By the middle of the thirteenth century the entire works of Aristotle were more or less sufficiently known. For the most part they were translated from the Arabic, where they had lain hid for six centuries, like papyri discovered in an Egyptian mummy case. They were made known by Alexander Hales at Paris, by Albert the Great and Aquinas, his pupil and successor. Albert of Cologne, the 'Universal Doctor,' as they called him, might himself, by virtue of his encyclopædic method, be styled

the Aristotle of the thirteenth century, as St. Bonaventura, the 'Seraphic Doctor,' the mystical metaphysician, may be called the Plato of the thirteenth century. Roger Bacon, the Oxford Franciscan, is even yet but imperfectly known to us, though he is often compared, not unfavourably, with his famous namesake, the author of the *Novum Organum*. But, in spite of the amazing ingenuity of the founder of natural philosophy in modern Europe, we can hardly hesitate to place above all his contemporaries—the 'Angelic Doctor,' Thomas Aquinas, 'the Descartes of the thirteenth century, and beyond doubt the greatest philosophic mind between Aristotle and Descartes.

Albert, Roger, Thomas, combined, as did Aristotle and Descartes, the science of nature with the philosophy of thought; and, though we look back to the *Opus Majus* of Roger Bacon with wonder and admiration for his marvellous anticipatory guesses of modern science, we cannot doubt that Aquinas was truly the mightier intellect. Roger Bacon was, indeed, four centuries in advance of his age—on his own age and on succeeding ages he produced no influence at all. But Aquinas was 'the master of those who know' for all Christian thinkers from his death, in 1274, until the age of Francis Bacon and Descartes. Roger Bacon, like Leonardo da Vinci, or Giordano Bruno, or Spinoza, belongs to the order of intellectual pioneers, who are too much in advance of their age and of its actual resources to promote civilisation as they might do, or even to make the most of their own extraordinary powers.

An age which united aspiring intellect, passionate devotion, and constructive power, naturally created a new type of sacred art. The pointed architecture, that

we call Gothic, had its rise, its development, its highest splendour in the thirteenth century, to which we owe all that is most lovely in the churches of Chartres, Amiens, Reims, Paris, Bourges, Strassburg, Cologne, Burgos, Toledo, Westminster, Salisbury, and Lincoln. It is true that there are some traces of the pointed style in France in the twelfth century, at St. Denis, at Sens, and at Laon; but the true glories of this noble art belong, in France, to the reigns of Philip Augustus and of St. Louis; in England, to those of Henry III. and Edward I. In these two countries we must seek the origin of this wonderful creation of human art, of which Chartres, Amiens, and Westminster are the central examples. These glorious fanes of the thirteenth century were far more than works of art: they were at once temples, national monuments, museums, schools, musical academies, and parliament halls, where the whole people gathered to be trained in every form of art, in all kinds of knowledge, and in all modes of intellectual cultivation. They were the outgrowth of the whole civilisation of their age, in a manner so complete and intense, that its like was never before seen, except on the Acropolis of Athens, in the age of Æschylus and Pericles. It is not enough to recall the names of the master masons—Robert de Luzarches, Robert de Coucy, Erwin of Steinbach, and Pierre de Montereau. These vast temples are the creation of generations of men and the embodiment of entire epochs; and he who would know the Middle Ages should study in detail every carved figure, every painted window, each canopy, each relief, each portal in Amiens, or Chartres, Reims, Bourges, Lincoln, or Salisbury, and he will find revealed to him more than he can read in a thousand books.

Obviously the thirteenth century is the great age of

architecture—the branch of art which of all the arts of form is at once the most social, the most comprehensive, and the most historic. Great buildings include sculpture, painting, and all the decorative arts together; they require the co-operation of an entire people; and they are, in a peculiar manner, characteristic of their age. The special arts of form are more associated with individual genius. These, as was natural, belong to centuries later than the thirteenth. But, even in the thirteenth, sculpture gave us the peopled portals and the exquisite canopies of our northern cathedrals, the early palaces of Venice, and the carvings of Nicolas and John of Pisa, which almost anticipate Ghiberti and Donatello. And in painting, Cimabue opens in this century the long roll of Italian masters, and Giotto was already a youth of glorious promise, before the century was closed.

The literature of the thirteenth century does not, in the strict sense of the term, stand forth with such special brilliancy as its art, its thought, and its political activity. As in most epochs of profound stirring of new ideas and of great efforts after practical objects, the energy of the age was not devoted to the composition of elaborate works. It was natural that Dante should be a century later than Barbarossa and Innocent, and that Petrarch of Vaucluse should be a century later than Francis of Assisi. But the thirteenth century was amply represented, both in poetry, romance, and prose history. All of these trace their fountain-heads to an earlier age, and all of them were fully developed in a later age. But French prose may be said to have first taken form in the chronicle of Villehardouin at the opening of the century, and the chronicle of Joinville at its close. The same century also added to the Catholic

Hymnal some of the most powerful pieces in that glorious Anthology—the *Dies Ira*, the *Stabat Mater*, the grand hymns of Aquinas, of Bonaventura, and of Thomas of Celano. It produced also that rich repertory of devotional story, the *Golden Legend* of Voragine. It was, moreover, the thirteenth century which produced the main part of the *Roman de la Rose*, the favourite reading of the Middle Ages, some of the best forms of the Arthurian cycle, Rutebœuf and the French lyrists, some of the most brilliant of the Troubadours, Sordello, Brunetto Latini, Guido Cavalcanti, and the precursors and associates of Dante.

As to Dante himself, it is not easy to place him in a survey of the thirteenth century. In actual date and in typical expression he belongs to it, and yet he does not belong to it. The century itself has a transitional, an ambiguous character. And Dante, like it, has a transitional and double office. He is the poet, the prophet, the painter of the Middle Ages. And yet, in so many things, he anticipates the modern mind and modern art. In actual date, the last year of the thirteenth century is the 'middle term' of the poet's life, his thirty-fifth year. Some of his most exquisite work was already produced, and his whole mind was grown to maturity. On the other hand, every line of the *Divine Comedy* was actually written in the fourteenth century, and the poet lived in it for twenty years. Nor was the entire vision complete until near the poet's death in 1321. In spirit, in design, in form, this great creation has throughout this double character. By memory, by inner soul, by enthusiasm, Dante seems to dwell with the imperial chiefs of Hohenstaufen, with Francis and Dominic Bernard and Aquinas. He paints the Catholic and Feudal world; he seems saturated with the Catholic

and Feudal sentiment. And yet he deals with popes, bishops, Church, and conclaves with the audacious intellectual freedom of a Paris dialectician or an Oxford doctor. Between the lines of the great Catholic poem we can read the death-sentence of Catholic Church and Feudal hierarchy. Like all great artists, Dante paints a world which only subsisted in ideal and in memory, just as Spenser and Shakespeare transfigured in their verse a humanistic and romantic society such as had long disappeared from the region of fact. And for this reason, and for others, it were better to regard the sublime *Dies Irae*, which the Florentine wanderer chanted in his latter years over the grave of the Middle Ages, as belonging in its inner spirit to a later time, and as being in reality the dawn of modern poetry.

In Dante, as in Giotto, in Frederick II., in Edward I., in Roger Bacon, we may hear the trumpet which summoned the Middle Ages into the modern world. The true spirits of the thirteenth century, still Catholic and Feudal, are Innocent III., St. Francis, Stephen Langton, Grosseteste, Aquinas, Bonaventura, and Albert of Cologne; Philip Augustus, St. Louis, the Barons of Rummynede, and Simon de Montfort; the authors of the *Golden Legend* and the *Catholic Hymns*, the Doctors of Paris, Oxford, and Bologna; the builders of Amiens, Notre Dame, Lincoln, and Westminster.

## CHAPTER VI

### WHAT THE REVOLUTION OF 1789 DID<sup>1</sup>

‘ Tout ce que je vois, jette les semences d’une révolution qui arrivera inmanquablement. . . Les Français arrivent tard à tout, mais enfin ils arrivent. . . Alors, ce sera un beau tapage. Les jeunes gens sont bien heureux ; ils verront de belles choses. ’—VOLTAIRE.

THE movement known as the Revolution of 1789 was a transformation—not a convulsion ; it was constructive even more than destructive ; and if it was in outward manifestation a chaotic *revolution*, in its inner spirit it was an organic *evolution*. It was a movement in no sense local, accidental, temporary, or partial ; it was not simply, nor even mainly, a political movement. It was an intellectual and religious, a moral, social, and economic movement, before it was a political movement, and even more than it was a political movement.

If it is French in form, it is European in essence. It belongs to modern history as a whole quite as much as to the eighteenth century in France. Its germs began centuries earlier than the generation of 1789, and its activity will long outlast the generation of 1889. It is not an episode of frenzy in the life of a single nation. In all its deeper elements it is a condensation of the history of mankind, a repertory of all social and political problems, the latest and most complex of all the great crises through which our race has passed.

<sup>1</sup> *Fortnightly Review*, vol. xiv, N.S. June 1889.

Let us avoid misunderstanding of what we are now speaking. Most assuredly the close of the eighteenth century in France displayed a convulsion, a frenzy, a chaos such as the world's history has not often equalled. There was folly, crime, waste, destruction, confusion, and horror of stupendous proportions, and of all imaginable forms. There was the Terror, the Festival of Reason, the Reaction, and all the delirium, the orgy, the extravagance, which give brilliancy to small historians and serve as rhetoric to petty politicians. Assuredly the revolution closed in with most ghastly surprises to the philanthropists and philosophers who entered on it in 1789 with so light a heart. Assuredly it has bequeathed to the statesmen and the people of our century problems of portentous difficulty and number. But we are speaking now neither of '93 nor of '95, nor of '99, of no local or special incident, of no single event, nor of political forms. We are in this essay dealing exclusively with 'the ideas of '89,' with the movement which at Versailles, on 5th May 1789, took outward and visible shape. And we are about to deal with it in its deeper, social, permanent, and human side, not in its transitory and material side. The Seine, the Loire, and the Rhone have washed away the blood which once defiled their streams, the havoc caused by the orgies of anarchy has been effaced, years make fainter the memory of crimes and follies, of revenge and jealousy. But the course of generations still deepens the meaning of 'the ideas of '89,' of the social, intellectual, economic new birth which then received official recognition, operating in a conscious and popular form the reformation that, in a spontaneous form, had long been brooding in so many generous hearts and profound brains.



No reading of merely French history, no study of the reign of Louis XVI. by itself can explain this great movement—no political history, no narrative of events, no account of any special institution. Neither the degeneration of the monarchy, nor the corruption of the nobility, nor the disorder of the administration, nor the barbarism of the feudal law, nor the decay of the Church, nor the vices of society, nor the teaching of any school, nor all of these together—are adequate to explain the revolution. They are enough to account for the confusion, waste, conflict, and fury of the contest—*i.e.* for the explosion. But they do not explain how it is that hardly anything was set up in France between 1789 and 1799 which had not been previously discussed and prepared, that between 1789 and 1799 an immense body of new institutions and reformed methods of social life were firmly planted in such a way that they have borne fruit far and wide in France and through Europe. Nor do any of these special causes just enumerated suffice to explain the passion, the contagious faith, the almost religious fanaticism which was the inner strength of the revolution and the source of its inexhaustible activity. What we call the French Revolution of 1789, was really a new phase of civilisation announcing its advent in form. It had the character of religious zeal because it was a movement of the human race towards a completer humanity.

Rhetoricians, poets, and preachers have accustomed us too long to dwell on the lurid side of the movement, on its follies, crimes, and failures; they have overrated the relative importance of the catastrophe, and by profuse pictures of the horrors, they have drawn off attention from its solid and enduring fruits. In the midst of the agony it was natural that Burke, in the sunset of his

judgment, should denounce it. But it was a misfortune for the last generation that the purple mantle of Burke should have fallen on a prophet, who was not a statesman but a man of letters, who, with all Burke's passion and prejudice, had but little of his philosophic power, none of his practical sagacity, none of the great Whig's experience of affairs and of men.\* The 'universal bon-fire' theory, the 'grand suicide' view, the 'chaos-come-again' of a former generation, are seen to be ridiculous in ours. The movement of 1789 was far less the final crash of an effete system than it was the new birth of a greater system, or rather of the irresistible germs of a greater system. The contemporaries of Tacitus, Trajan, and Marcus Aurelius could see nothing but ruin in the superstition of the Galileans, just as the contemporaries of Decius, Julian, and Justinian saw nothing but barbarism in the Goths, the Franks, and the Arabs.

The year 1789, more definitely than any other date marks any other transition, marks the close of a society which had existed for some thousands of years as a consistent whole, a society more or less based upon military force, intensely imbued with the spirit of hereditary right, bound up with ideas of theological sanction, sustained by a scheme of supramundane authority; a society based upon caste, on class, on local distinctions and personal privilege, rooted in inequality, political, social, material, and moral; a society of which the hope of salvation was the maintenance of the *status quo*, and of which the Ten Commandments were Privilege. And the same year, 1789, saw the official installation of a society which was essentially based on peace, the creed of which was industry, equality, progress; a society where change was the evidence of life, the end of which was social welfare, and the means social co-operation

and human equity. Union, communion, equality, equity, merit, labour, justice, consolidation, fraternity—such were the devices and symbols of the new era. It is therefore with justice that modern Europe regards the date 1789 as a date that marks a greater evolution in human history more distinctly than, perhaps, any other single date which could be named between the reign of the first Pharaoh and the reign of Victoria.

One of the cardinal pivots in human history we call this epoch, and not at all a French local crisis. The proof of this is complete. All the nations of Europe, and indeed the people of America, contributed their share to the movement, and more or less partook in the movement themselves. It was hailed as a new dispensation by men of various race; and each nation in turn more or less added to the movement and adopted some element of the movement. The intellectual and social upheaval, which for generations had been preparing the movement, was common to the enlightened spirits of Europe and also to the Transatlantic Continent. The effects of the movement have been shared by all Europe, and the distant consequences of its action are visible in Europe to the third and the fourth generations. And lastly, all the cardinal features of the movement of 1789 are in no sense locally French, or of special national value. They are equally applicable to Europe, and indeed to advanced human societies everywhere. They appeal to men primarily, and to Frenchmen secondarily. They relate to the general society of Europe, and not to specific national institutions. They concern the transformation of a feudal, hereditary, privileged, authoritative society, based on *antique right*, into a republican, industrial, equalised, humanised society, based on a scientific view of the *Common Weal*. But

this is not a national idea, a French conception of local application. It is European, or rather human. And thus, however disastrous to France may have been the travail of the movement officially proclaimed in 1789, from a European and a human point of view it has abiding and pregnant issues. May we profit by its good whilst we are spared its evil.

Obviously, the salient form of the revolution was French, ultra-French; entirely unique and of inimitable peculiarity in some of its worst as well as its best sides. The delirium, the extravagances, the hysterics, and the brutalities which succeeded one another in a series of strange tragi-comic tableaux from 1789 till 1795, were most intensely French, though even they, from Caps of Liberty to Festival of Pikes, have had a singular fascination for the revolutionists of every race. But the picturesque and melodramatic accessories of the revolution have been so copiously over-coloured by the scene-painters and stage-carpenters of history, that we are too often apt to forget how essentially European the revolution was in all its deeper meanings.

A dozen kings and statesmen throughout Europe were, in a way, endeavouring to enter on the same path as Louis XVI. with Turgot and Necker. In spite of the contrast between the government of England and the government of France, between the condition of English industry and that of France, Walpole and Pitt offer many striking points of analogy with Turgot and Necker. The intellectual commerce between England and France from (let us say) 1725 to 1790 is one of the most memorable episodes in the history of the human mind. The two generations which followed the visit of Voltaire to England formed an intellectual alliance between the leading spirits of our two nations: an alliance

of amity, offensive and defensive, scientific, economic, philosophical, social, and political, such as had not been seen since the days of the Greco-Roman education or the cosmopolitan fellowship of mediæval universities. Voltaire, Montesquieu, Hume, Adam Smith, Franklin, Turgot, Quesnay, Diderot, Condorcet, d'Argenson, Gibbon, Washington, Priestley, Bentham—even Rousseau, Mably, Mirabeau, and Jefferson—belonged to a Republic of Ideas, where national character and local idiosyncrasy could indeed be traced in each, but where the essential patriotism of humanity is dominant and supreme.

In England, Pitt; in Prussia, Frederick; in Austria, Joseph; in Tuscany, Leopold; in Portugal, Pombal; in Spain, d'Aranda; all laboured to an end, essentially similar, in reforming the incoherent, unequal, and obsolete state of the law; in rectifying abuses in finance; in bringing some order into administration, in abolishing some of the burdens and chains on industry; in improving the material condition of their states; in curbing the more monstrous abuses of privilege; and in founding at least the germs of what we call modern civilised government. Some of these things were done ill, some well, most of them tentatively and with a naïve ignorance of the tremendous forces they were handling, with a strange childishness of conception, and in all cases without a trace of suspicion that they were changing the sources of power and their political constitution. And in all this the rulers were led and inspired by a crowd of economical and social reformers who eagerly proclaimed Utopia at hand, and who mistook generous ideals for scientific knowledge. For special causes the great social evolution concentrated itself in France towards the latter half of the eighteenth century; but there was nothing about it exclusively

French. Socially and economically viewed, it was almost more English and Anglo-American than French; intellectually and morally viewed, it was hardly more French than it was English. Hume, Adam Smith, Burke, and Priestley are as potent in the realm of thought as Diderot, Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Condorcet. And in the realm of social reform, Europe owes as much to Bentham, Howard, Clarkson, Franklin, Washington, Pitt, and Frederick, as it does to Turgot, Mirabeau, Girondins, Cordeliers, or Jacobins. The 'ideas of '89' were the ideas of the best brains and most humane spirits in the advanced nations of mankind. All nations bore their share in the labour, and all have shared in the fruits.

But if the revolution were so general in its preparation, why was the active manifestation of it concentrated in France? and why was France speedily attacked by all the nations of Europe? These two questions may be answered in two words. In France only were the old and the new elements ranged face to face without intermixture or contact, with nothing between them but a decrepit and demoralised autocracy. And no sooner had the inevitable collision begun, than the governments of Europe were seized with panic as they witnessed the fury of the revolutionary forces. In England the Reformation, the Civil War, the Revolution of 1689, and the Hanoverian dynasty, had transferred the power of the monarchy to a wealthy, energetic, popular aristocracy, which had largely abandoned its feudal privileges, and had closely allied itself with the interests of wealth. During two centuries of continual struggle and partial reform, a compromise had been effected in Church and in State, wherein the claims of king, priest, noble, and merchant had been fused into a tolerable *modus vivendi*.

In France the contrary was the case. During two centuries the monarchy had steadily asserted itself as the incarnation of the public, claiming for itself all public rights, and undertaking (in theory) all public duties; crushing out the feudal authorities from all national duties, but guaranteeing to them intact the whole of their personal privileges. As it had dealt with the aristocracy so it dealt with the Church; making both its tool, filling both with corruption, and giving them in exchange nothing but license to exploit the lay commonalty. The lay commonalty naturally expanded in rooted hostility to the privileged orders, and to the religious and hereditary ideas on which privilege rested. It grew stronger every day, having no admixture with the old orders, no points of contact, having no outlet for its activity, harassed, insulted, pillaged, and rebuffed at every turn, twenty-six millions strong against two hundred thousand; all distinctions, rivalries, and authority, as amongst this *tiers état*, uniformly crushed by the superincumbent weight of Monarchy, Church, and Privilege.

The vast mass of the people thus grew consolidated, without a single public outlet for its energies, or the smallest opportunity for experience in affairs; the whole ability of the nation for politics, administration, law, or war, was forced into abstract speculation and social discussion; conscious that it was the real force and possessed the real wealth of the nation; increasing its resources day by day, amidst frightful extortion and incredible barbarism, which it was bound to endure without a murmur; the thinking world, to whom action was closed, kept watching the tremendous problems at stake in their most naked and menacing aspect, without any disguise, compromise, or alleviation. And in France,

where the old feudal and ecclesiastical system was concentrated in its most aggravated form, there it was also the weakest, most corrupt, and most servile. And there, too, in France the *tiers état* was the most numerous, the most consolidated, the most charged with ideas, the most sharply separated off, the most conscious of its power, the most exasperated by oppression. Thus it came about that a European evolution broke out in France into revolution. The social battle of the eighteenth century began in the only nation which was strictly marshalled in two opposing camps; where the oppressors were utterly enfeebled by corruption; where the oppressed were fermenting with ideas and boiling with indignation.

The fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries saw the silent universal but unobserved dissolution of the old mediæval society. For crusades the soldier took to the puerilities of the tournament. The lordly castles fell one by one before the strong hand of the king. The humble village expanded into the great trading town. The Church was torn by factions and assailed by heresies. The musket-ball destroyed the supremacy of the mailed knight. The printing-press made science and thought the birthright of all. The sixteenth century saw a temporary resettlement in a strong dominant monarchy and a compromise in religion. Whilst the seventeenth century in England gave power to a transformed and modified aristocracy, in France it concentrated the whole public forces in a monstrous absolutism, whilst nobility and Church grew daily more rife with obsolete oppression. Hence, in France, the ancient monarchy stood alone as the centre of the old system. Beside it stood the new elements unfettered and untransformed. It was the simplicity of the



problem, the glaring nature of the contrast, which caused the intensity of the explosion. The old system stood with dry-rot in its heart; the new was bursting with incoherent hopes and undefined ideals. The Bastille fell—and a new era began.

Take a rapid survey of France in the closing years of the Monarchy. She had not recovered the desolation of the long wars of Louis XIV., the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, the banishment of the Protestants, the monstrous extravagance of Versailles and the corrupt system which was there concentrated. The entire authority was practically absorbed by the Crown, whilst the most incredible confusion and disorganisation reigned throughout the administration. A network of incoherent authorities crossed, recrossed, and embarrassed each other throughout the forty provinces. The law, the customs, the organisation of the provinces, differed from each other. Throughout them existed thousands of hereditary offices without responsibility, and sinecures cynically created for the sole purpose of being sold. The administration of justice was as completely incoherent as the public service. Each province, and often each district, city, or town, had special tribunals with peculiar powers of its own and anomalous methods of jurisdiction. There were nearly four hundred different codes of customary law. There were civil tribunals, military tribunals, commercial tribunals, exchequer tribunals, ecclesiastical tribunals, and manorial tribunals. A vast number of special causes could only be heard in special courts: a vast body of privileged persons could only be sued before special judges. If civil justice was in a state of barbarous complication and confusion, criminal justice was even more barbarous. Preliminary torture before trial, mutilation, ferocious punishments,

a lingering death by torment, a penal code which had death or bodily mutilation in every page, were dealt out freely to the accused without the protection of counsel, the right of appeal, or even a public statement of the sentence. For ecclesiastical offences, and these were a wide and vague field, the punishment was burning alive. Loss of the tongue, of eyes, of limbs, and breaking on the wheel, were common punishments for very moderate crimes. Madame Roland tells us how the summer night was made hideous by the yells of wretches dying by inches after the torture of the wheel. With this state of justice there went systematic corruption in the judges, bribery of officials from the highest to the lowest, and an infinite series of exactions and delays in trial. To all but the rich and the privileged, a civil cause portended ruin, a criminal accusation was a risk of torture and death.

The public finances were in even more dreadful confusion than public justice. The revenue was farmed to companies and to persons who drew from it enormous gains, in some cases, it is said, cent. per cent.: The deficit grew during the reign of Louis XV. at the rate of four or five millions sterling each year; and by the end of the reign of Louis XVI. the deficit had grown to eight or ten millions a year. But as to the exact deficit for each year, or as to the total debt of the nation, no man could speak. Louis XV. in one year personally consumed eight millions sterling, and one of his mistresses alone received during her reign a sum of more than two millions. Just before the Revolution the total taxation of all kinds amounted to some sixty millions sterling. Of this not more than half was spent in the public service. The rest was the plunder of the privileged, in various degrees, from king to the

mistress's lackey. This enormous taxation was paid mainly by the non-privileged, who were less than twenty-six millions. The nobles, the clergy, were exempt from property-tax, though they held between them more than half of the entire land of France. The State could only raise loans at a rate of twenty per cent.

With an army of less than 140,000 men, there were 60,000 officers, in active service or on half-pay, all of them exclusively drawn from the privileged class. Twelve thousand prelates and dignified clergy had a revenue of more than two millions sterling. Four millions more was divided amongst some 60,000 minor priests. Altogether the privileged orders, having hereditary rank or ecclesiastical office, numbered more than 200,000 persons. Besides these, some 50,000 families were entitled to hereditary office of a judicial sort, who formed the 'nobility of the robe.' The trades and merchants were organised in privileged guilds, and every industry was bound by a network of corporate and local restrictions. Membership of a guild was a matter of purchase. Not only was each guild a privileged corporation, but each province was fiscally a separate state, with its local dues, local customs' tariff, and 'special frontiers. In the south of France alone there were some 4000 miles of internal customs' frontier. An infinite series of dues were imposed in confusion over districts selected by hazard or tradition. An article would sell in one province for ten times the price it would have in another province. The dues chargeable on the navigation of a single river amounted, we are told, to thirty per cent. of the value of the goods carried.

But these abuses were trifling or at least endurable when set beside the abuses which crushed the cultivation

of the soil. About a fifth of the soil of France was in mortmain, the inalienable property of the Church. Nearly half the soil was held in big estates, and was tilled on the *métayer* system. About one-third of it was the property of the peasant. But though the property of the peasant, it was bound, as he was bound, by an endless list of restrictions. In the Middle Ages each fief had been a kingdom of itself; each lord a petty king; the government, the taxation, the regulation of each fief, was practically the national government, the public taxation, and the social institutions. But in France, whilst the national authority had passed from the lord of the fief to the national Crown, the legal privileges, the personal and local exemptions, were preserved intact. The peasant remained for many practical purposes a serf, even whilst he owned his own farm. A series of dues were payable to the lord; personal services were still exacted; special rights were in full vigour. The peasant, proprietor as he was, still delved the lord's land, carted his produce, paid his local dues, made his roads. All this had to be done without payment, as *corvée*, or forced labour tax. The peasants were in the position of a people during a most oppressive state of siege, when a foreign army is in occupation of a country. The foreign army was the privileged order. Everything and every one outside of this order was the subject of oppressive *requisition*. The lord paid no taxes on his lands, was not answerable to the ordinary tribunals, was practically exempt from the criminal law, had the sole right of sporting, could alone serve as an officer in the army, could alone aspire to any office under the Crown. In one province alone during a single reign two thousand tolls were abolished. There were tolls on, bridges, on ferries, on paths, on

fairs, on markets. There were rights of warren, rights of pigeon-houses, of chase, and fishing. There were dues payable on the birth of an heir, on marriage, on the acquisition of a new property by the lord, dues payable for fire, for the passage of a flock, for pasture, for wood. The peasant was compelled to bring his corn to be ground in the lord's mill, to crush his grapes at the lord's wine-press, to suffer his crops to be devoured by the lord's game and pigeons. A heavy fine was payable on sale or transfer of the property; on every side were due quit-rents, rent-charges, fines, dues in money and in kind, which could not be commuted and could not be redeemed. After the lord's dues came those of the Church, the tithes payable in kind, and other dues and exactions of the spiritual army. And even this was but the domestic side of the picture. After the lord and the Church came the king's officers, the king's taxes, the king's requisitions, with all the multiform oppression, corruption, and peculation of the farmers of the revenue and the intendants of the province.

Under this manifold congeries of more than Turkish misrule, it was not surprising that agriculture was ruined and the country became desolate. A fearful picture of that desolation has been drawn for us by our economist, Arthur Young, in 1787, 1788, 1789. Every one is familiar with the dreadful passages wherein he speaks of haggard men and women wearily tilling the soil, sustained on black bread, roots, and water, and living in smoky hovels without windows; of the wilderness presented by the estates of absentee grandees; of the infinite tolls, dues, taxes, and impositions, of the cruel punishments on smugglers, on the dealers in contraband salt, on poachers, and

deserters. It was not surprising that famines were incessant, that the revenue decreased, and that France was sinking into the decrepitude of an Eastern absolutism. 'For years,' said d'Argenson, 'I have watched the ruin increasing. Men around me are now starving like flies, or eating grass.' There were thirty thousand beggars, and whole provinces living on occasional alms, two thousand persons in prison for smuggling salt alone. Men were imprisoned by *lettres de cachet* by the thousand.

This state of things was only peculiar to France by reason of the vast area over which it extended, of the systematic scale on which it was worked, and the intense concentration of the evil. In substance it was common to Europe. It was the universal legacy of the feudal system, and the general corruption of hereditary government. In England, four great crises, that of 1540, 1648, 1688, and 1714, had very largely got rid of these evils. But they existed in even greater intensity in Ireland and partly in Scotland; they flourished in the East of Europe in full force; the corruption of government was as great in the South of Europe. The profligacy of Louis XV. was hardly worse in spirit, though it was more disgusting than that of Charles II. The feudalism of Germany and Austria was quite as barbarous as that of France. And in Italy and in Spain the Church was more intolerant, more depraved, and more powerful. But in France, the whole of the antique abuses were collected in their most aggravated shape, in the most enormous volume, and with the least of compensating check. In England, the persons with hereditary rank hardly numbered more than a few hundreds, and perhaps the entire families of the noble class did not exceed two thousand; in France

they exceeded one hundred thousand. In England the prelates and dignified clergy hardly exceeded one or two hundred; in France they numbered twelve thousand. In England the entire body of ecclesiastics did not number twenty thousand; in France they much exceeded one hundred thousand. In England, no single subject had any personal privilege, except the trifling personal exemptions of a few hundred peers; no exemption from taxation was known to the law; and no land was free from the king's taxes. In France more than half the soil, and two orders, amounting together to over two hundred thousand persons, were exempt. In England, with trifling exceptions, the old feudal rights had become obsolete or nominal. The legal rights of the lord had disappeared, along with his castle, in the great Civil War. In France the lord retained his social prerogatives after losing the whole of his public functions. In Germany, in Italy, in Spain, the lord still retained a large part of his real power, and had been forced to surrender some definite portion of his oppressive privilege.

But in France, where the whole of the ancient abuses existed on a scale and with an organised completeness that was seen nowhere else, there was also the most numerous, the most enlightened, and the most ambitious body of reformers. In presence of this portentous misrule and this outrageous corruption, an army of ardent spirits had been gathered together with a passionate desire to correct it. It was an army recruited from all classes—from the ancient nobility, and even the royal blood, from the lords of the soil, and the dignitaries of the Church, from lawyers, physicians, merchants, artificers; from sons of the petty tradesman, like Diderot; from sons of the notary, like Voltaire; of the clock-

maker, like Rousseau; of the canoness, like d'Alembert; of the provost, like Turgot; of the marquis, like d'Argenson and Condorcet. This band of thinkers belonged to no special class, and to no single country. Intellectually speaking, its real source in the first half of the century was in England, in English ideas of religious and political equality, in English institutions of material good government and industry. In the two generations preceding 1789, such Englishmen as Bolingbroke, Hume, Adam Smith, Priestley, Bentham, John Howard (one might almost claim part, at least, of Burke and of Pitt); such Americans as Franklin, Washington, and Jefferson; such Italians as Beccaria and Galiani; such Germans as Lessing, Goethe, Frederick the Great, and Joseph II., had as much part in it as Voltaire, Montesquieu, Turgot, Diderot, and Condorcet, and the rest of the French thinkers who are specially associated in our thoughts with the movement so ill-described as the French Revolution.

By the efforts of such men every element of modern society, and every political institution as we now know it, had been reviewed and debated—not, indeed, with any coherent doctrine, and utterly without system or method. The reformers differed much amongst themselves, and there were almost as many schemes of political philosophy, of social economy, of practical organisation, as there were writers and speakers. But in the result, what we now call modern Europe emerged, recast in State, in Church, in financial, commercial, and industrial organisation, with a new legal system, a new fiscal system, a humane code, and religious equality. Over the whole of Europe the civil and criminal code was entirely recast; cruel punishments, barbarous sentences, anomalies, and confusion were swept away; the treat-



ment of criminals, of the sick, of the insane, and of the destitute was subjected to a continuous and systematic reform, of which we have as yet seen only the first instalment. The whole range of fiscal taxation, local and imperial, external and internal, direct and indirect, has been in almost every part of Western Europe entirely reformed. A new local administration on the principle of departments, subdivided into districts, cantons, and communes, has been established in France, and thence copied in a large part of Europe. The old feudal system of territorial law, which in England had been to a great extent reformed at the Civil War, was recast not only in France but in the greater part of Western Europe. Protestants, Jews, and Dissenters of all orders practically obtained full toleration and the right of worship. The monstrous corruption and wealth of the remnants of the mediæval Church was reduced to manageable proportions. Public education became one of the great functions of the State. Public health, public morality, science, art, industry, roads, posts, and trade, became the substantive business of government. These are 'the ideas of '89'—these are the ideas which for two generations before '89 Europe had been preparing, and which for three generations since '89 she has been systematically working out.

We have just taken a rapid survey of France in its political and material organisation down to 1789, let us take an equally rapid survey of the new institutions which 1789 so loudly proclaimed, and so stormily introduced.

1. For the old patriarchal, proprietary, *de jure* theory of rule, there was everywhere substituted on the Continent of Europe the popular, fiduciary, *pro bono publico* notion of rule. Government ceased to be the privilege of the ruler; it became a trust imposed on the ruler for

the common weal of the ruled. Long before 1789 this general idea had been established in England and in the United States. During the whole of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries English political struggles had centred round this grand principle: the Declaration of Independence in 1776 had formulated it in memorable phrases. But how little the full meaning of this—the cardinal idea of 1789—was completely accepted even in England, the whole history of the reign of George III. may remind us, and the second and reactionary half of the careers of William Pitt and Edmund Burke. Over the continent of Europe, down to 1789, the proprietary *jure divino* theory of privilege existed in full force, except in some petty republics, which were of slight practical consequence. The long war, the reactionary Empire of Napoleon, and the royal reaction which followed its overthrow, made a faint semblance of revival for privilege. But, after the final extinction of the Bourbons in 1830, the idea of privilege disappeared from the conception of the State. In England, the Reform Act of 1832, and finally the European movements of 1848, completed the change. So that throughout Europe, west of Russia and of Turkey, all governments alike—imperial, royal, aristocratic, or republican as they may be in form, exist more or less in fact, and in profession exist exclusively, for the general welfare of the nation. This is the first and central idea of '89.

This idea is, in the deeper meaning of the word, *republican*—so far as republican implies the public good, the common weal as contrasted with privilege, property, or right. But it is not exclusively republican, in the sense that it implies the absence of a single ruler; nor is it necessarily democratic, in the sense of being direct government by numbers. It is an error to assume that

the Revolution of 1789 introduced as an abstract doctrine the democratic republic pure and simple. Republics and democracies of many forms grew out of the movement. But the movement itself also threw up many forms of government by a dictator, government by a Council, constitutional monarchy, and democratic imperialism. All of these equally claim to be based on the doctrine of the common weal, and to represent the ideas of '89. And they have ample right to make that claim. The movement of '89, based on the dominant idea of the public good as opposed to privilege, took all kinds of form in the mouths of those who proclaimed it. Voltaire understood it in one way, Montesquieu in another, Diderot in a third, and Rousseau in a fourth. The democratic monarchy of d'Argenson, the constitutional monarchy of Mirabeau, the democratic republic of Marat, the plutocratic republic of Vergniaud, the republican dictatorship of Danton, even the military dictatorship of the First Consul—were all alike different readings of the Bible of '89. It means government by capacity, not by hereditary title, with the welfare of the whole people as its end, and the consent of the governed as its sole legitimate title.

2. The next grand idea of '89 is the scientific consolidation of law, administration, personal right, and local responsibility. Out of the infinite confusion of inequality that the lingering decay of Feudalism during four centuries had left in Europe, France emerged in the nineteenth century with a scientific and uniform code of law, a just and scientific system of land tenure, an admirable system of local organisation, almost absolute equality of persons before the law, and almost complete assimilation of territorial right. The French peasant who in 1789 struck Arthur Young with horror and pity, as the

scandal of Europe, is now the envy of the tillers of the soil in most parts of the continent, and assuredly in these islands. The most barbarous land tenure of the eighteenth century, the most brutal criminal code, the most complicated fabric ever raised by privilege, which France in 1789 exhibited to the scorn of mankind, has given way to the most advanced scheme of personal equality, to the paradise of the peasant proprietor, and to the least feudalised of all codes, which France can exhibit at present. It would be far easier to show in England to-day the unweeded remnants of feudal privilege, of landlord law and landlord justice, and certainly it is easier to show it in Ireland and in Scotland, than it is in France. Territorial oppression, the injustice of the land-laws, the burden of game, or the customary exactions of the landlord, may be found in Ireland, may be found in Scotland, may be found in England—but they have absolutely disappeared in France. Her eight million peasants who own the soil are the masters of their own destiny, for France has now eight million kings, eight million lords of the soil. The 20,000 or 30,000, it may be, who in these islands own the rural lands, should ponder when the turn of their labourers will come to share in 'the ideas of '89.'

3. Down to 1789 France exhibited an amazing chaos of local government institutions. In the nineteenth century she possessed one that was perhaps the most symmetrical, the most scientific, and the most adaptable now extant. It may well be that under it centralisation has been grossly exaggerated and local life suppressed. That, however, is a legacy from the old monarchy, and is not the work of the Revolution. The idea of '89 is not centralisation, but decentralisation. The excessive concentration of power in the hands of a prefect is part

of the ancient tradition of France. The aim of d'Argenson, of Turgot, of Mably, of Malesherbes, was to give free life to local energy, to restrain the abuses of bureaucracy. There is still in France an oppressive measure of bureaucracy and a monstrous centralisation. But a large part of the Continent has adopted from her the organic arrangement of subordinate authorities which the Revolution created, and which may be equally adopted by monarchy, empire, or republic; which may be combined with local self-government as well as with imperial autocracy.

4. Much the same may be said of the law which the Revolution founded. The Civil Code of France, to which so unfairly Napoleon contrived to give his name, was neither the work of Bonaparte, nor of the Empire, nor of the nineteenth century. It was in substance the work of Pothier, of the great lawyers of the eighteenth century, from whose writings four-fifths of it is textually taken; and Tronchet, its true author, is essentially a man of the eighteenth century. It is true that, compared with some modern codes, the Civil Code of France is visibly defective. But, such as it is, it has made the tour of Europe, and is the basis of half the codes now extant. It was the earliest scientific code of modern law, for the Code of Frederick belongs to the world of yesterday, and not of to-day. The Civil Code of France remains still, with all its shortcomings, the great type of a modern code, and is a truly splendid fruit of the ideas of '89.

5. With the Code came in also a scientific recasting of the entire system of justice—civil, criminal, commercial, and constitutional; local and central, primary, intermediate, and supreme. Within a generation at most, to a great extent within a few years, France passed from a system of justice the most complex,

cruel, and obsolete, to a system the most symmetrical, humane, and scientific. And that which in England, and in many other countries of Europe, has been the gradual work of a century, was reached in France almost at a bound by the generation that saw '89.

6. With a new law there came in a new fiscal system, a reform as important, as elaborate as that of the civil code, and we must say quite as successful. The financial condition of France during the whole of the reigns of Louis XV. and Louis XVI. had presented perhaps the most stupendous example of confusion and corruption which could be found outside a Turkish or Asiatic despotism. It was unquestionably the direct, primary, material origin of the Revolution. It was the main object of the labours of the truest reformers of the age. D'Argenson, Turgot, Malesherbes, Necker, and Mirabeau devoted to the appalling task the best of their thoughts and efforts. Before all of them, and before all the names of the century, the noble Turgot stands forth as the very type of the financial reformer. The conditions in which he sacrificed his life in vain efforts were too utterly bad for even his genius and heroic honesty to prevail. But the effort was not in vain. The idea of '89 was to put an end to the monstrous injustice and plunder of the old monarchic and feudal fisc, to establish in its place an equal, just, scientific system of finance. Compared with English finance, the great triumph of parliamentary government, the financial system of modern France seems often defective to us. But as compared with the financial condition of the rest of Europe, the reforms of '89 have practically accomplished the end.

7. Along with a reformed finance came in a reformed tariff, the entire sweeping away of the provincial

customs' frontier, that monstrous legacy of feudal disintegration, and a complete revision of the burdens on industry. Political economy as a science may be said to be one of the cardinal ideas of '89; the very conception of a social science, vaguely and dimly perceived by the great leaders of thought in the eighteenth century, was itself one of the most potent causes, and in some ways, one of the most striking effects of the Revolution of '89. The great founders of the conception of a social science were all prominent chiefs of the movement which culminated in that year. Voltaire, Montesquieu, Diderot, d'Argenson, Turgot, Quesnay, Condorcet, were at once social economists and precursors of the great crisis. Adam Smith was as much an authority in France as he was in England. Political economy and a scientific treatment of the national production and consumption became with the Revolution a cardinal idea of statesmen and publicists. We are apt to think that our French friends are weak-kneed economists at best, and perversely inclined to economic heresy. It may be so. Our free-trade doctrines have been preached to deaf ears, and our gospel of absolute freedom makes but little progress in France. But it can hardly be denied that the economic legislation of France is entirely in accord with economic doctrine in France, or that the political economy of the State is abreast of the demands of public opinion.

8. To pass from purely material interests to moral, social, and spiritual, we must never lose sight of the splendid fact that national education is an idea of '89. A crowd of the great names in the revolutionary movement are honourably identified with this sacred cause. Voltaire, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Diderot, Turgot, Condorcet, d'Argenson, Mirabeau, Danton—all felt to

the depths of their soul that the New Commonwealth could exist only by an enlightened people. Public education was the inspiration of the *Encyclopædia*; it was the gospel of '89, and the least tarnished of all its legacies to our age. In the midst of the Terror and the war, the Convention pursued its plans of founding a public education. The idea was in no sense specially French, in no sense the direct work of the revolutionary assemblies. England, America, Germany, Europe as a whole, partook of the new conception of the duties of the State. It belongs to the second half of the eighteenth century altogether. But of all the enthusiasts for popular education, there are no names which will survive longer in the roll of the benefactors of humanity than those of Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, Turgot, and Condorcet.

9. With popular education there went quite naturally a series of social institutions of a philanthropic sort. Hospitals, asylums, poor-houses, museums, libraries, galleries of art and science, public parks, sanitary appliances, and public edifices, were no longer matters of royal caprice, or of casual benefaction: they became the serious work of imperial and municipal government. Almost everything which we know as modern civilisation in these social institutions has taken organic shape and systematic form within these hundred years. Except for its royal palaces, Paris in the opening of the eighteenth century was a squalid, ill-ordered, second-rate city. Marseilles, Lyons, Bordeaux, had neither dignity, beauty, nor convenience. Except for a few royal foundations, neither France, nor its capital, was furnished with more than the meagrest appliances of public health and charitable aid. The care of the sick, ~~the~~ weak, of the destitute, of children, of the people,



the emancipation of the negro—all this is essentially an idea of '89.

10. To sum up all these reforms we must conclude with that of the Church. The Church of France in the eighteenth century, if it were not the most splendid and the most able, was the most arrogant and oppressive survival of the old Medieval Catholicism. With an army of more than 50,000 priests, and some 50,000 persons in monasteries and bound by religious vows, owning one-fifth of the soil of France, with a revenue which, in the values of to-day, approached ten millions sterling, with personal, territorial, and legal privileges without number, the Gallican Church in the age of Voltaire and Diderot was a portent of pride, tyranny, and intolerance. A Church which, down to 1766, could still put Protestants to death with revolting cruelty, which is stained with the damning memories of Calas and La Barre, which was almost as corrupt as the nobility, almost as oppressive as the royalty, which added to the barbarism of the *ancien régime* the savage traditions of the Inquisition, which left undone all that it ought to have done, and did all that it ought not to have done—such a Church cumulated the earth. It fell, and loud and great was the crash, and fierce have been the wailings which still fill the air over its ruins. The world has heard enough and too much of Voltaire's curse against *l'Infâme*, of Diderot's ferocious distich, how the entrails of the last priest should serve as halter to the last king. No one to-day justified the fury of their diatribes, except by reminding the nineteenth century what it was that, in the eighteenth century, was called the Church of Christ. The Church fell, but it returned again. It revived transformed, reformed, and shorn of its pretensions. Its intolerance has

is now but one of other endowed one-fifth of its old wealth, none of its old prerogatives, and but a shadow of its old pride.

It proposes to deal with the social movement of 1789, not with the movement of the intellectual and humanitarian. It was its prelude and spiritual prelude. It is needed of the principal work of the social and political reformers for practical purposes they may have in general heads. There was the work of the old elements, and the work of the new. The work was intellectual and practical, and, social and political on the fourfold division: (1) the school of the old intellectual system was the school by which the old political system was maintained; those who laboured to construct the moral basis of society; and (4) to construct a new social and political system. The scholars and teachers, writers and artists were rigidly separated from each other. The scholars and most of them combine the work of the more or less degree. The most of them did something in the way of intellectual basis. The most of the new world did much both directly and indirectly to destroy the old. Critics of the old were destroying the throne and the altar; they least designed it. Orthodox reforms rung the knell of the old as that of the mediæval society. The moral organisation of human life

had grown up together; and the result was undivided.

All through the eighteenth century the intellectual movement was gathering vitality. At the opening years of the epoch the general mind saw the inevitable effect the movement would have on the old society; and, in his memorable *Discours sur le dessein de la Révolution* at hand (1704), he warned the French society to prepare for the storm. For three centuries France seemed to live only in thought. It descended to the vilest and most servile level which history had ever reached. From the death of Colbert in 1683, until the ministry of Turgot in 1774, it seemed to have lost the race of great statesmen, and to be delivered over to the intriguer and the sycophant. Well may the historian say that in passing from the politicians of the reign of Louis XV. to the thinkers of the same epoch, we seem to be passing from the age of the pigmies to that of the Titans. Into the world of ideas France flung herself with passion and with power. The wonderful accumulation of scientific discoveries which followed the achievements of Newton reacted powerfully on religious thought, and even on public policy. Mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology, began to assume the outlined proportions of coherent sciences; and some vague sense of their connection and real unity filled the mind of all. Of the physical sciences there emerged a dim conception of a crowning human science, which it was the achievement of the eighteenth century to found. History ceased to be a branch of literature; it began to have practical uses for mankind of to-day; and it was recognised as the momentous life-story of the autobiography of the human race. Early

## THE REVOLUTION OF 1789 DID

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part. The Abbé Aza-  
Marquis d'Argenson, and  
de l'Encyclopédie were already, at  
ing of Revolution, covering the ground  
of '89, in a vague, timid, and tenta-  
ive, but withal in a spirit of enthusiasm. At the  
time they were not destined to see  
this group of premature reformers, of those pre-  
cursors and heralds of '89, none is more illustrious than  
Marquis d'Argenson, nor is any book more memor-  
able than his *Reflections on the Government of France*  
(1791). Here we have the germ of the democratic  
philosophy which has again and again reasserted its  
strength in France: here are the germs of the local  
administration; here is the first proposal for the sym-  
metrical system of eighty-six departments which since  
1790 replaced the ancient provinces with all their an-  
tiquities. Here also is the repudiation by an illustrious  
man of the privileges of nobility, the condemnation of  
all restrictions on trade, and the dream of a new  
France where personal equality should reign, and where  
the cultivator of the soil should be lord of the land he  
cultivated.

The chief spirit of the social and political destructive  
philosophy was as obviously Rousseau as Voltaire had been the  
chief spirit of the religious destructives. Our business  
at the moment is with neither of these schools and with  
neither of these famous men. As all heterodoxy seems  
to be latent in the mordant criticism of Voltaire, so  
the subsequent political anarchy seems to be concentrated

the morbid passion of Rousseau; - But though Rousseau must be regarded as in all essentials a destructive, there are many ways in which he had a share in the constructive movement of '89. In the splendour of his pleading for education, for respecting the dignity of the citizen, in his passion for art, in his pathetic dreams of an ideal simplicity of life, in his spiritual Utopia of a higher and more humane humanity, prophet of anarchy as he was, Rousseau has here and there added a stone to the edifice we are still building to-day.

When we turn to the constructive school there we find Diderot supreme in the intellectual world, Dargot in the political; whilst Condorcet is the disciple and complement of both. With the purely philosophical work of any of these three we are not now concerned. Our interest is entirely with the social and political question. And at first sight it may seem that Diderot has no share in any but the philosophical. But this most universal genius had a mind open to all sides of the human problem. His grand task the *Encyclopædie* (and we may remember that the first idea of it came from an English *Encyclopædia*, which it was proposed to translate), the *Encyclopædie* is largely, and indeed mainly concerned with economic and social matters. Throughout it runs the potent principle of the unity of man, knowledge, of man's life, and of the whole human race. Diderot does far more than discuss abstract questions of science. He traces out the ramifications of science into the minutest and humblest operations of industry. In the *Encyclopædia* we have installed for the first time on authority that conception of modern times - the marriage of Science with Industry. Machines, trade, manufactures, implements, tools, processes were each in turn the object of Diderot's enthusiastic study. He and

his comrades, men like Turgot, d'Alembert, Condorcet, felt that the true destiny of man was the industrial. They strove to place labour on its right level, to dignify its task, and to glorify its mission. Never had philosophy been greater than when she girt up her robes, penetrated into the workshop, and shed her light upon the patient toil of the handicraftsman. For the first time in modern history thought and science took labour to their arms. Industry received its true honour, and was installed in a new sphere. It was a momentous step in the progress of society as much as in the progress of thought.

Chief of all the political reformers, in many things the noblest type of the men of '89, is the great Turgot; he, who if France could have been spared a revolution, was the one man that could have saved her. After him, Necker, a much inferior man, though with equally good intentions, attempted the same task: and the years from 1774-1781 sufficed to show that reform without revolution was impossible. But the twenty years of noble effort, from the hour when Turgot became intendant of Limoges in 1761 until the fall of Necker's ministry in 1781, contained an almost complete rehearsal, were a prelude and epitome, of the practical reforms which the Revolution accomplished after so much blood and such years of chaos. To give the official career of Turgot would be a summary of the ideas of '89. The suppression of the *corvée*, of the restrictions on industry, on the resources of locomotion, the restoration of agriculture, to reduce the finances to order, to diminish public debt, to establish local municipal life, to reorganise the chaotic administration, to remove the exemptions of the noble and ecclesiastical orders, to suppress the monastic orders, to equalise the taxation, to establish a scientific and uniform code of law, a scientific and uniform

scale of weights and measures, to reform the feudal land law, to abolish the feudal gilds and antiquated corporations whose obsolete pretensions crushed industry, to recall the Protestants, to establish entire freedom of conscience, to guarantee complete liberty of thought; lastly, to establish a truly national system of education—such were the plans of Turgot which for two short years he struggled to accomplish with heroic tenacity and elevation of spirit. Those two years, from 1774-1776, are at once the brightest and the saddest in the modern history of France. For almost, the first time, and certainly for the last time, a great philosopher, who was also a great statesman, the last French statesman of the old order, held for a moment almost absolute power. It was a gigantic task, and a giant was called in to accomplish it. But against folly even the gods contend in vain. And before folly, combined with insatiable selfishness, lust, greed, and arrogance, the heroic Turgot fell. They refused him his bloodless, orderly, scientific Revolution; and the bloody, stormy, spasmodic Revolution began.

To recall Turgot is to recall Condorcet, the equal of Turgot as thinker, if inferior to Turgot as statesman. Around the mind and nature of Condorcet there lingers the halo of a special grace. Sprung from an old baronial family with bigoted prejudices of feudal right, the young noble, from his youth, broke through the opposition of his order to devote himself to a life of thought. Spotless in his life, calm, reserved, warm hearted and tender, 'the volcano covered with snow' that flamed in his breast, had never betrayed him to an outburst of jealousy, vanity, ill-humour, or extravagance. The courtly and polished aristocrat, without affectation and without hysterics, bore himself as one of the simplest of the



people. The privileges of the old system, which were his birthright, filled him with a sense of unmixed abhorrence. His scepticism, vehement as it was, did not spring from intellectual pride or from turbulent vanity. He disbelieves in orthodoxy out of genuine thirst for truth, and denounces superstition out of no alloy of feeling save that of burning indignation at its evil works. The *Life of Turgot* by Condorcet, 1787, might serve indeed as prologue to the memorable drama which opens in 1789. It was most fitting that the mighty movement should be heralded by the tale of the greatest statesman of the age of Louis XVI., told by one of its chief thinkers. And the fine lines of Lucan, which Condorcet placed as a motto on the title-page of his *Life of Turgot*, may serve as the device, not of Turgot alone, but of Condorcet himself, and indeed of the higher spirits of '89 together—

‘Secta fuit servare modum, finemque tenere,  
Naturamque sequi, patriæque impendere vitam;  
Nec sibi, sed toti genitum se credere mundo.’

‘The only party they acknowledged was the rule of good sense, and to keep firm to their purpose, to submit to the teaching of Nature’s law, and to offer up their lives for their country—holding that man is born not for himself, but for humanity in the sum.’ He who would understand what men mean by ‘the ideas of ’89’ should mark, learn, and inwardly digest those two small books of Condorcet, the *Life of Turgot*, 1787, and the *Historical Sketch of the Progress of the Human Mind*, 1795.

The annals of literature have no more pathetic incident than the history of this little book—this still unfinished vision of a brain prematurely cut off. In the midst of

the struggle between Mountain and Gironde, Condorcet who stood between both and who belonged to neither, he who had the enthusiasm of the Mountain without its ferocity, the virtues and culture of the Girondists without their pedantic formalism, was denounced and condemned to death, and dragged out a few weeks of life in a miserable concealment. There, with death hanging round him, he calmly compiled the first true sketch of human evolution. Amidst the chaos and bloodshed he reviews the history of mankind. Not a word of pain, doubt, bitterness, or reproach is wrung from him. He sees nothing but visions of a happy and glorious future for the race, when war shall cease, and the barriers shall fall down between man and man, class and class, race and race, when man shall pursue a regenerate life in human brotherhood and confidence in truth. Industry there shall be the common lot, and the noblest privilege. But it shall be brightened to all by a common education, free, rational, and comprehensive, with a lightening of the burdens of labour by scientific appliances of life and increased opportunity for culture. 'Our hopes,' he writes, in that last lyric chapter of the little sketch, 'our hopes as to the future of the human race may be summed up in these three points: the raising of all nations to a common level; the progress towards equality in each separate people; and, lastly, the practical amelioration of the lot of man.' 'It is in the contemplation of such a future,' he concludes, 'that the philosopher may find a safe asylum in all troubles, and may live in that true paradise, to which his reason may look forward with confidence, and which his sympathy with humanity may invest with a rapture of the purest kind.'

The ink of these pages was hardly dry when the writer by death escaped the guillotine to which repub-

licans condemned him in the name of liberty. How many of us can repeat a hundred anecdotes of the guillotine, of its victims, and its professors, yet how few of us have seriously taken to heart the *Sketch of Human Progress*! The blood is dried up, but the book lives, and human progress continues on the lines there so prophetically traced. 'I have studied history long,' says de Tocqueville, 'yet I have never read of any revolution wherein there may be found men of patriotism so sincere, of such true devotion of self, of more entire grandeur of spirit.'

